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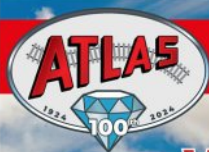
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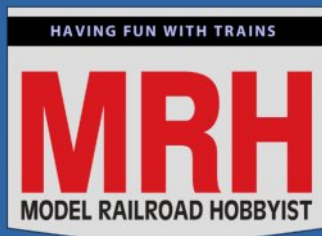


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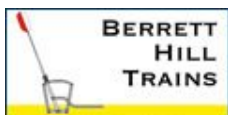
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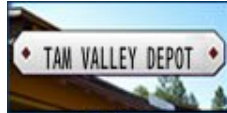
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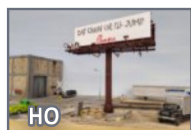
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# PUBLISHER'S MUSINGS



Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2024

**JOE FUGATE: BEING A MORE GRACIOUS  
MODEL RAILROADER ...**



## **WE'RE OFTEN TOLD THE HOBBY IS GRAYING, AND TO SOME EXTENT THAT'S TRUE.**

A lot of the modelers who have the time and money to attend shows, especially the national ones, have retired from their day job. However, places like YouTube clearly show many younger faces doing the hobby, so the younger faces are out there.

But one thing I sometimes hear from modelers are stories of how they were treated unkindly by “the grumpy old men” at a club or meet. I certainly don’t want to paint most modelers with this as a broad brush. But this complaint comes up enough that I know it happens.

Add to this the insulation of being able to hide behind a keyboard with some anonymity when we’re online and the rudeness seems to come out even more.

Every so often, I like to remind the MRH audience about some things we may have gotten a bit lax on, so this month, it’s a reminder to be more gracious. The old adage “treat others the way you would like to be treated” is still very true. It’s how we get a kinder, gentler world. Would anyone like that?

## Overcoming impatience

I think a lot of rudeness comes from our rapid-paced culture driving us to be impatient. Here's some helpful tips to battle impatience. We're all family here, right?

**Take several deep breaths:** This actually works surprisingly well. First, cultivate being aware you're in a situation where your blood pressure is rising, so deliberately pause, start taking slow deep breaths, and intentionally relax your body. Remind yourself it's not a life and death situation (generally it's not), and to dial down the emotions. Practice accepting that life's not perfect and that people make mistakes.

**Build a tolerance for being a bit uncomfortable:** Just like body builders deliberately stress their body to build endurance, it can be helpful to grow your ability to tolerate being a little uncomfortable and staying under control. If you will develop this ability, it can pay dividends later by enabling you to keep a clear head when others around you may be losing it.

Building endurance in uncomfortable situations is nothing to belittle – it can literally improve your health and prolong your life.

An important part of building this endurance comes from learning to accept things you cannot change. Many times, there's nothing you can do to fix the situation, so impatience solves nothing. Learn to accept your circumstances and you will find it can greatly reduce stress.

**When you're feeling rushed, slow down:** Focus on the people in front of you and take the time to deliberately notice your surroundings. Actually *look* at the people as people who have value and notice what's going on around you. See the child playing with their toy while mama shops. Give them a smile and a wink.

**Try to have fun:** Gratitude starts with your attitude. Decide life's too short to not have fun even when it's stressful. Learn to see the humor in most any situation. Resolve to smile and laugh more.



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Aim to say thanks throughout your day to folks who serve you. Developing a playful attitude increases your happiness and can be major contributor to a longer, more healthy life.

Think about the folks everyone loves to be around the most. It's the folks with the most playful attitude. They just seem to have a sparkle in their eye and a zest for life.

### Being kind online

When you're not looking someone directly in the eye, it can be easier to be rude and unkind if you feel they're pushing your buttons, being dense, or trying to steamroller you.

First, it's very important to remember text-only communication is missing a lot of what we depend on in person to get what's being said correctly. There's no tone of voice, no inflections, no facial expressions, no gestures – none of that is present, nothing, nada.

What I've seen is 90% of the time someone takes a text-only communication poorly, it's being misunderstood. So again, slow down. If you assume you have misinterpreted it, you'll be right more often than to assume they're being mean.

The other thing I've seen on the MRH forum is someone being rude to someone for say "not getting it" when they have no idea what that other person is actually dealing with.

A number of the folks on the MRH forum are in their 70s, 80s, or even their 90s, and they have various health issues. I know of folks who regularly contribute to the MRH forum who are dealing with cancer, failing vision, tremors, mental decline, and various situations such as Aspergers.

Heck, I struggle with some Asperger issues myself. Aspergers can make you amazingly brilliant in some ways and a complete inept dunce in other ways.



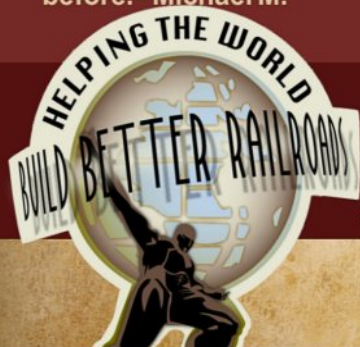
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## PUBLISHER'S MUSINGS | 4

### Do you really know them?

Unless you actually know the person you're responding to, keep in mind you have no idea what their situation may be. Don't assume they're "otherwise normal" and just being difficult.

Let me use my elderly mother who passed recently as an example. In her youth, she could juggle a lot of things at once. I remember times when she would get one of those "put it together yourself" products and decipher the instructions like champ.

As my mom reached her late 80s, she declined mentally. Even simple instructions would confuse her. Belittling her was of no value and would only make her angry.



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No, what we needed to do what break things down into baby steps and lead her by the hand through it.

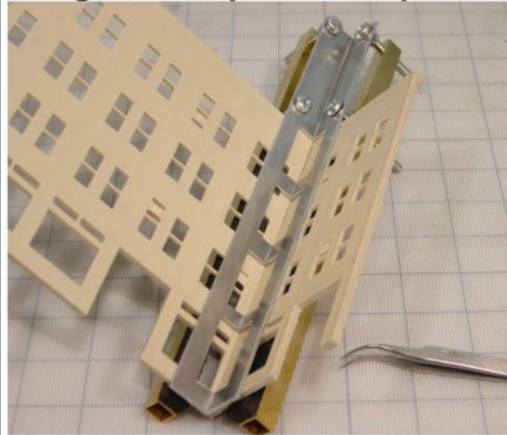
What would you do if my mom was to ask a question on the forum and after you answered her question, she had a dozen more questions about your answer that she didn't understand?

You would not know my mom from Adam (or Eve in this case), so you might think she was just being dense and maybe even not really reading what you wrote. Would you be tempted to say, "Hey, just read what I told you already. It's all there, just follow the instructions I laid out – it's all there in black and white!"

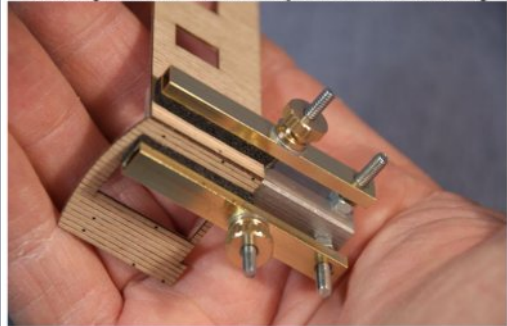
See my point? You assume my mom is a normal, fully functioning person with zero impairments. But to those who actually know my mom's situation, you're the one who's being a jerk!

Always be mindful in the online world that if you don't actually know the person's

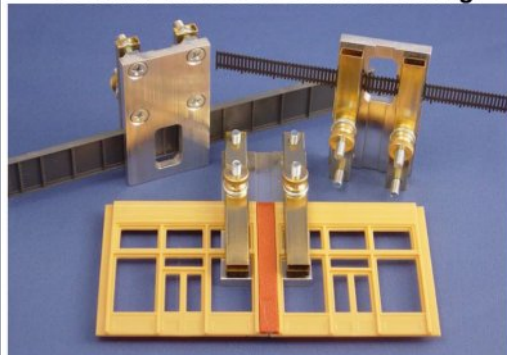
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situation, you can't assume they're just being belligerent and uncooperative. They may actually not be able to process what you're telling them unless you work to help them "get it."

That's why it's always best to be considerate online. You risk being a total jerk if you take an unkind stance to someone who is just a handle to you and little more.

Ironically, in more than a few cases, if you acted that way in person where we could all see the person and their situation, folks would quickly decide *you* would be the one "voted off the island" as the saying goes.

## Is the MRH forum Elitist?

Another comment I see come up now and then is that the MRH forum is "elitist." Along with that accusation, it's often coupled with "that's why folks have left."

First, we discourage "holier than thou" remarks, and we likewise resist comments that seek to classify modelers into various groups with regard to fidelity of modeling.

Model railroading is not a science, it's an art, or more accurately, it's a craft: an activity involving skill in making things by hand. People have differing skill levels – and differing aspirations.

Remember where I said previously about saying thank you? Akin to that is developing an appreciation for the sheer amount of effort that goes into any of the modeling folks post on the MRH forum.

With my Siskiyou Line 1, I built a number of bridges. For instance, I modeled a tall curved wooden trestle on the Coos Bay branch. I was flabbergasted that it took me almost 6 months to build that bridge working 4-6 hours per week.

I literally had over a thousand hours in all the bridges on SL1. This taught me a valuable lesson: whenever I see a modeled



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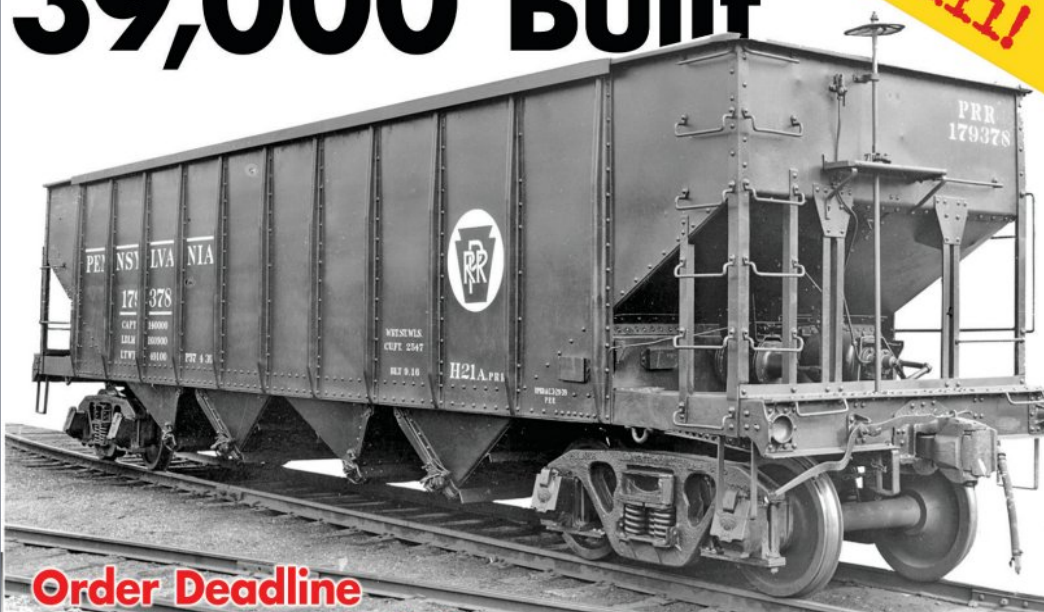
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scene, I immediately try to appreciate the massive effort that's gone into the models being shown. Cutesy or totally true to the prototype, the effort is still significant.

## In Summary

So let's bring this discussion in for a landing.

There are many reasons to be more patient with our fellow modelers and to resolve to daily live out MRH's slogan, *Having fun with trains*.

Elect to be more fun loving even when things get stressful and you'll inject some much needed goodwill into this rather frustrating modern world.

What would things be like if most of us took this approach each day? I'm looking in the mirror as I write this ... ☒

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**Forum**  
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**THIS MONTH**

Compiled by **JOE FUGATE**



*MRH* forum member **Mark Stafford** posted on a thread I started back in 2018 wondering what a steam loco ProtoThrottle might look like. Mark took up my challenge and has been working on a steam throttle simulator with all the right physics.

He's now got a Java program that allows taking the simulator for a spin!

Follow Mark's progress via the link below.

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[View the full thread on the MRH website](#)

## ► MRH'S MONTHLY GREAT MODELER POSTS



1. *MRH* forum member **NorthWoods Bill** (William Rutherford) started a thread chronicling a Fine Scale Miniatures Coaling Tower kit build.

## Building the FSM Coaling Tower

*MRH* forum member **Northwoods Bill** (William Rutherford) kicked off a thread on his build of the Fine Scale Miniatures Coaling Tower kit. Bill says,

“I picked this gem up at Amherst and am excited to build it. I also picked up the SRMW Stone Roundhouse. The two of these together along with a yet TBD ash pit and water tower should make a really cool signature scene in the yard. The tower and the roundhouse will both require a little track to be moved which I will chronicle on my MCP Railway blog when the time comes.”

Bill's already making good progress, so follow along as this build takes shape!

[View the full thread on the MRH website](#)



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2. *MRH* author **cduckworth** (Charlie Duckworth) recently posted this upgrade to an Accurail gondola.

## Accurail's gondola converted to a Texas & Pacific version

*MRH* author **cduckworth** (Charlie Duckworth) posted this gondola upgrade project on the *MRH* forum.

"I carved off the hand grabs, added the ladders, added a channel end and poling pockets. I finished it off with K4 decals. Accurail cars are very affordable, simple to build, and well detailed. It's not much of a stretch to bring them up to a \$50 resin model build in quality."

In fact, coming up in *MRH* is a Pennsy X26 car upgrade project that further illustrates Charlie's point.

Follow the discussion on this project at the link below.

[View the full thread on the \*MRH\* website](#)



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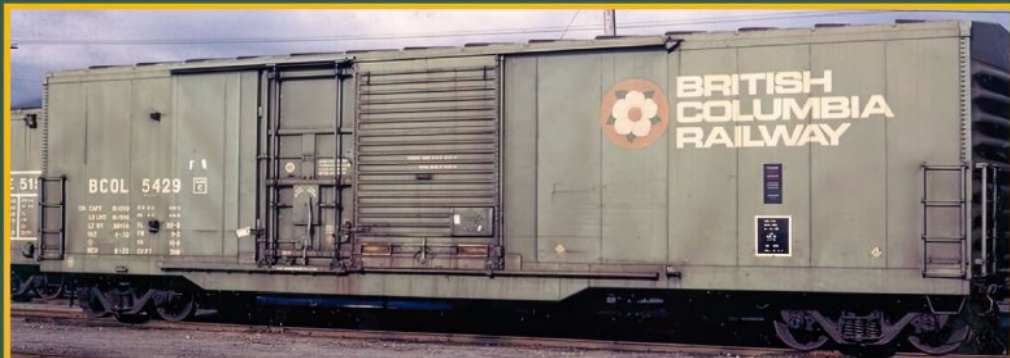
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# ★ NORTH AMERICAN RAILCAR CORPORATION



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PGE - light green, built 1971



BCOL - light green, built 1972



BCOL - large italic lettering, built 1986



BCOL - 80,000 series, re-built 1990

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PGE - dark green, light green door, built 1971



BCOL - dark green, built 1972



BCOL - with underline, built 1986



BCOL - brown, CN noodle & url, vents, shopped 2003



BCOL - 100,000 series, re-built 1990 w/vents

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3. *MRH* forum member **gmpullman** (Edmund T.) posted some workbench lighting ideas on the *MRH* Unusual Tools thread.

## Unusual tools that make modeling easier

*MRH* forum member **gmpullman** (Edmund T.) recently posted some cool workbench lighting ideas on the *MRH* long-running Unusual tools thread.

“A few days ago I was trying to locate the microscopic 'drill points' that Walthers provides for attaching grab irons to rolling stock. I decided what I was lacking was LIGHT. What I came up with was one of those book lights and the one I settled on is quite amazing! It has a USB-rechargeable battery, three color temps and five light levels plus an auto-off feature if that's your thing. So far I really like it. There are two 'butterfly' light segments that swing out to give a wider light spread.”

Follow this thread *MRH* forum for more cool tool ideas!

[View the full thread on the \*MRH\* website](#)



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## Weekly photo fun thread

This time I selected a couple “blast from the past” type photos that remind us of great model railroads over the history of the hobby.

View photo fun threads on *MRH* website

4. MRH author Thom (Thom Driggers) posted several recent photos from Geroge Sellios' Franklin and South Manchester. Thom has helped George with his layout and here he posted a photo of a steam loco he reconditioned for George.



5. TomHokel posted this photo from French's Gulch on his Pine Ridge Railroad. Tom's a big fan of John Allen's Gorre & Daphetid, and here he captured a G&D loco remake on his layout. Brings back memories!

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# WHAT'S NEAT

column



Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2024

**KEN PATTERSON** COVERS THIS MONTH:

- LAYOUT VISIT: END-OF-THE-LINE MODEL RAILROAD CLUB
- GEORGE BOGATIUK PAINTING BACKGROUND SCENES
- NEW PRODUCTS FROM BACHMANN



*click to play video*

**PHOTOS AND VIDEO OF SUPERB MODELS**

**THIS MONTH**, Ken introduces the BLI Conductor's Club and visits the End-of-the-Line Model Railroad Club. George Bogatiuk demonstrates backdrop painting with spray cans and cutout patterns. Finally, Bachmann's Tyler Haney shows off some new models coming soon.

## End-of-the-Line Model Railroad Club



1. Continuing their exploration of the Chicagoland area, the “What’s Neat” crew drops in on the End-of-the-Line Model Railroad Club in Villa Park, Illinois. Here Ken interviews John Prepelica and Mike Wasielewski, two of the 13 club members.

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2. Measuring 80 x 30 feet, the layout is designed to run long trains of 60 to 80 cars. The longest train that has been run on the layout was 220 cars with eight locomotives. The two mainline tracks are each just under 10 scale miles in length and the branch line is three scale miles long.



3. In the background of this photo of the coal mine is the tightest curve on the layout at 36 inches radius. The trackwork is Code 83 Atlas flex track with Peco and Atlas switches, and is laid so smoothly there is no difficulty in running one of those 80-car trains in reverse.



4. Located downstairs in a shopping center, most of their work is done on Sundays when they won't be blocking access for trucks making deliveries in the limited parking area. Access and a lack of parking makes holding open houses difficult.

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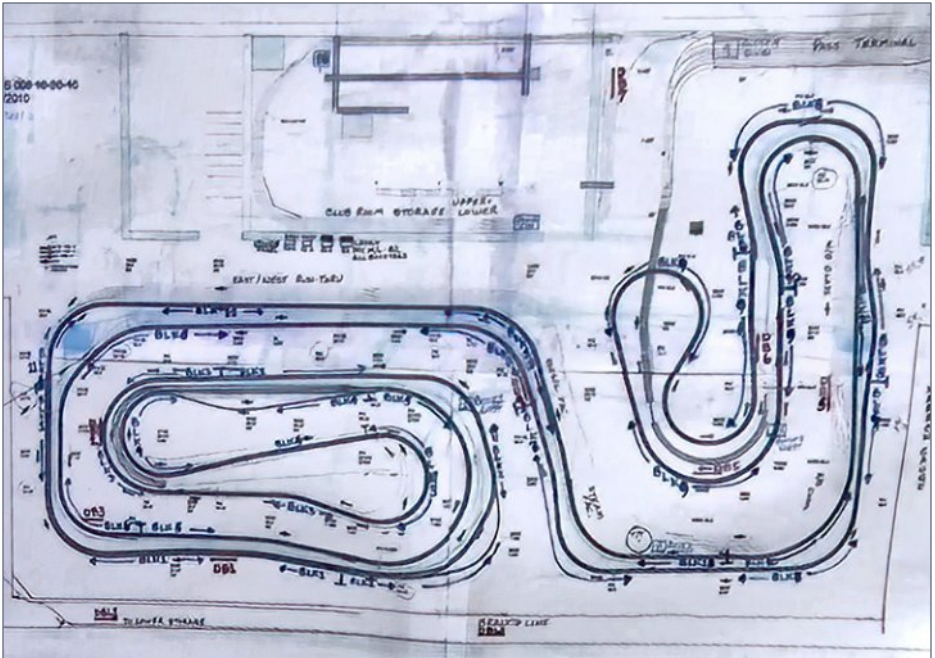
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5. Designed for walkaround operation, the layout averages 52 inches in height. They use 10AWG wire for the power bus with drops from every switch and piece of flex track. Using the NCE DCC system, the layout has six boosters on the mainline, one in the passenger area, and two boosters on the branch line.

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## George Bogatiuk painting background scenes



6. SoundTraxx's George Bogatiuk continues construction of his layout in his new house by demonstrating how he paints his backdrop scenes.



7. Using laser-cut stencils from New London Industries and cheap spray paint in blue, greens, and white, George shows how he quickly paints his backdrop.



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8. After painting the distant hills or mountains with a low-detail stencil in Midnight Blue, George uses two shades of green with a detailed stencil to represent the nearer hills.



9. Clouds are done with a cloud stencil in white. The white paint is also used to mist-over the blue hills in the distant background.



10. In a few minutes, plus drying time, this section of backdrop is finished.

**MRH note:** Since this video was created, The owners of New London Industries have decided to retire. Many of their stencil products can still be found both new and used online and at hobby shops.

## New products from Bachmann



11. Bachmann's Tyler Haney shows off the cover art for the new 2024 Bachmann catalog, featuring the Acela II train set.



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12. A&B Bachmann has two new train sets. The first is a Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus train in the Circus Spectacular set, featuring the new logos the circus is now using. A Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey extended-view caboose is also included in the train set.



13. A&B An On30 East Broad Top train set is also being released, featuring 2-6-0 steam locomotive #9 and two of the recently built passenger cars purchased by the East Broad Top RR.



14. HO scale products that will be available in new paint schemes include a Milwaukee Road SD40-2 decorated for the American Bicentennial in 1976.



15. In response to customer requests, several HO rolling stock products will be produced in two road numbers this year. This includes the large-dome chemical tank cars seen here decorated for the Arcadian Division of Allied Chemical, the small-dome chemical tank cars, the Bethlehem Steel 3-bay 100-ton hopper, the Trinity 5161 covered hopper, and the Airslide covered hopper.



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16. In N scale, the DC-only GP40 will be available in Baltimore & Ohio and Grand Trunk Western (CN Noodle). A CSX Bright Future paint scheme will be available for a DCC Sound Value-equipped GP40.

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17. A&B Tyler showed off painted samples of both the angled-hood and round-hood coil cars in N scale. The hoods for all the coil cars are removable and swapable, and the cars contain removable steel coil loads.



18. Bachmann's N scale smooth-side passenger cars will be available in the Pennsylvania Railroad's Fleet of Modernism paint scheme as seen here.  
Info: [bachmanntrains.com](http://bachmanntrains.com)



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Click on the video link at the beginning of the article to learn about Broadway Limited's new Conductor's Club, the full walkaround of the End of the Line Model Railroad Club, George Bogatiuk's cheap and easy backdrop painting, and all of the new products coming from Bachmann Trains. ☑



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# Woodland Scenics “Just-Plug” lighting system



Electrical  
Impulses

Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2024

1. Some of the many available lighting components. From left-to-right, N scale streetlamps, HO scale wall-mount gooseneck lamps, and stick-on flat ceiling lights, most useful for lighting structure interiors. Many varieties of each in different colors are available in several scales.



**MICHAEL TYLICK MMR** DEMONSTRATES AN EASY, EFFECTIVE SYSTEM FOR LIGHTING BUILDINGS ...

**IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT LIGHT EMITTING DIODES (LEDs) HAVE SO** quickly revolutionized model railroading illumination systems. They have many advantages over the older incandescent bulb systems.

LEDs are available in many colors and sizes – some as small as a pinhead. They can be made to glow blindingly bright or barely

perceptibly dim. They have a very low power demand, and are available in many different colors.

Being an electronic component rather than purely a hobby supply, they can be purchased at low cost. If successfully tested, they can be expected to operate for decades – they will likely never need replacement.

Along with all their good qualities come complications. Incandescent lamps required an appropriate power source and two wires. LEDs require either voltage regulators or current-limiting resistors to operate safely.

When several LEDs are wired together, it becomes difficult to calculate the correct resistance, even if one is vaguely familiar with Ohm's Law ( $E=IR$ ). Many LED illumination clinics I've attended seem too advanced for the novice to understand.

The Woodland Scenics Just-Plug system removes the confusing calculations. One simply plugs their LEDs into the Just-Plug control boxes, and plugs their “wall-wart” power supplies into an electrical outlet to be in business. No calculations are necessary.

The system includes the added advantage of the ability to dim individual LEDs with a full range of brightness from dark to blindingly bright. Additional control circuits can program the lights to go on and off in a predetermined sequence, a feature formerly available only in the realm of mechanical and electronic gadgeteers.

Woodland Scenics provides several different size and color LEDs for interior lighting, as well as some close to scale exterior lighting fixtures, including a wide range of street lamps [1]. They even offer animated structures, and automobiles with head and tail lights.

The Woodland Scenics plug-in wall-wart power supply is rated for 1 amp of current at 24 volts DC [2]. This should supply up to 50 Just-Plug LEDs, but it is advisable to not operate at a peak load. A good working capacity would be 40-45 LEDs.





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**2. The Woodland Scenics plug-in wall-wart power supply and light hub. Not shown are their Expansion Hubs which allow up to four LED pairs to operate from each Power Hub output.**

Any 24 VDC power supply would work, but the output would have to use the Woodland Scenics connector plug to work with the system. The Power Hub will operate up to eight paired LEDs of the same type. The dimmer control on the top of the control box is full range, and will go from completely off to blindingly bright.

Woodland Scenics also sells a Sequencing Hub that can turn the LEDs or the Power and Expansion Hubs on and off with an adjustable timer to easily allow more realistic day-to-night effects.

I have found many uses for the Just Plug system in my projects, as shown in photos.

## BAR MILLS CROSSING SHANTIES

I built two Bar Mills HO scale crossing shanties with different lighting approaches. For one, I lit the interior with a stick-on LED, and for the other, I lit the awning above the doorway with a “nano” light [3, 4].

I had to drill a no. 52 hole to pass the nano light’s wires into the shanty. Inserting the wires with a plug end attached would have required a 3/32” opening – much too large. I cut the wires to pass them through the no. 52 hole, then soldered them to the plug inside. Splicer plugs are available for this connection if soldering is undesirable.



**3. Two Bar Mills crossing shanties with different lighting approaches. The shanty at left has a stick-on LED attached to the ceiling, and the shanty at right has a nano light that will be under the awning.**



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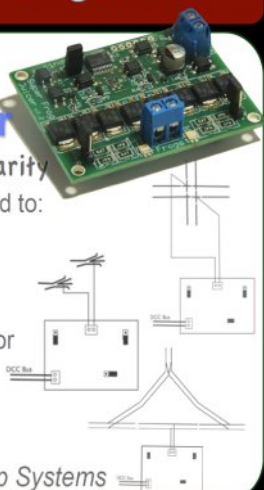
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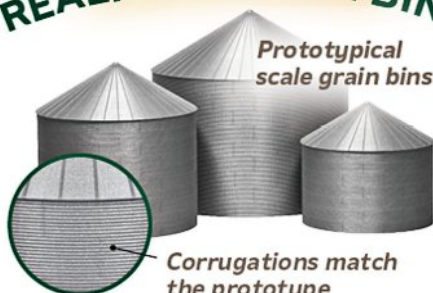
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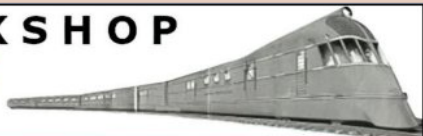
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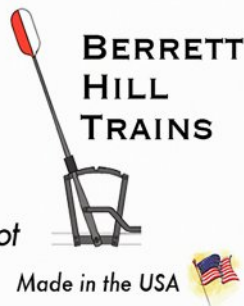


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**4. The completed lit shanties. Lit interiors demand interior details, especially in the foreground.**

## CUNDY HARBOR BOATHOUSE

The interior of the Bar Mills Cundy Harbor boathouse has a detailed laser-cut interior framing that is easily seen through the large boat entrance. Two stick-on LEDs light the interior, and a single wall-mount gooseneck lamp is over the side pedestrian door [5, 6].

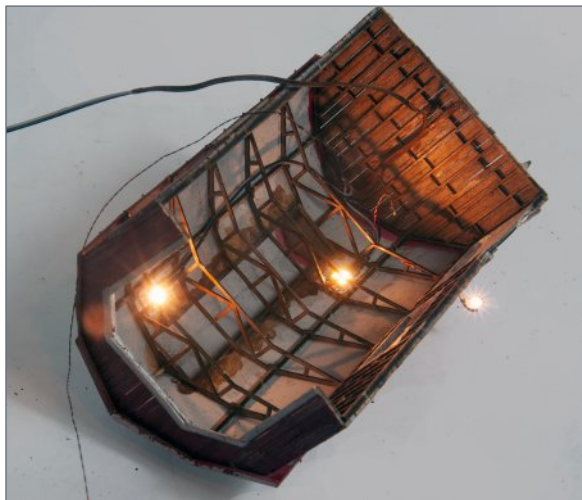
The two stick-ons in the boathouse share the same plug lead. Woodland Scenics recommends powering no more than two LEDs per plug, though I have safely used three. Different types of LEDs cannot share a single plug, however.

## CRANBERRY YARD RAILWAY EXPRESS BUILDING

I used three types of lighting for the Cranberry Yard Railway Express building [7-11]. Wall-mount gooseneck lamps went over the unsheltered doors, stick-on LEDs went over the sheltered doorways, and floodlights lit the interior. Especially with the gooseneck lamps, the LEDs are much closer to scale than the old grain-of-wheat incandescent bulbs.

Normally I would have attached stick-ons to the ceiling for interior lighting, but I had several floodlights I wanted to use.

Removing the plastic light shield from the flood lights permitted even more illumination.



5. Two stick-on LEDs light the interior of the boathouse, and a single wall-mount gooseneck lamp is over the side pedestrian door.



6. The completed Cundy Harbor Boathouse. The lighting shows off the detailed interior through the wide boat entrance.

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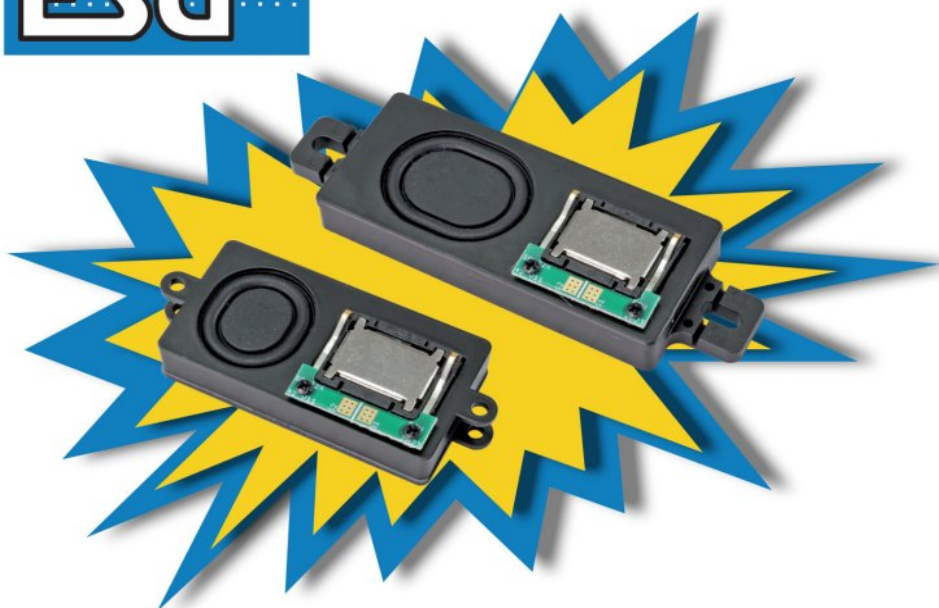
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7. Completed HO Bar Mills Cranberry Yard Railway Express building. The only visible lighting element is the gooseneck lamp over the freight door. The arm looks long, but the lamp is close to scale-size.



8. The other side has another gooseneck lamp. This one looks about right. In any case, the LED lamps are much smaller than incandescent grain-of-wheat lamps.



9. Wall-mount gooseneck lamps light unsheltered doors, stick-on LEDs light sheltered doorways, and ceiling-mounted floodlights light the interior.

## ROCKY POINT LIGHTHOUSE

The Walthers HO scale Rocky Point Lighthouse (their Eagle Point Lighthouse appears to be the same kit molded in different colors) required some additional work. Although the kit is molded in suitable colors, painting over the parts with the similar-colored paint gives a much better appearance.

I gave the main building interior and exterior lighting, with wall-mounted lamps applied next to the doors and stick-on LEDs applied to the underside of the roof. To provide the illu-



10. From the rear – the interior lighting is purposely set low, and is difficult to see next to the bright exterior lighting.



11. From the front.



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sion that something is inside, I gave the model a quick interior, using colored cardboard shapes [12, 13].

I wired all three wall lamps together to share one plug-in. This makes it possible to use fewer power hubs, but at the cost of individual control. All lights sharing a plug-in can only be dimmed or turned off as a group.

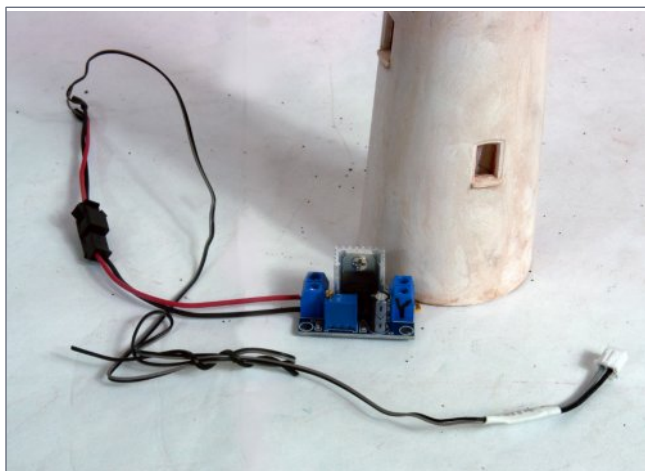


**12. The Rocky Point Lighthouse received three LED wall-mount lamps, two for the front door, one for the side door, and a stick-on LED for interior lighting. The colored cardstock shapes represent an interior.**



**13. Closeup of the side door lamp. The three wall-mounted lamps were wired to one plug-in connection.**

The lighthouse navigation light flasher circuit included in the Walthers kit requires a 12-14-volt input, but the Power Hub supplies 18 volts. I added a step-down adjustable voltage regulator module to permit the circuit to be powered by the Just Plug system, and a two-wire connector harness to connect the wiring [14].



14. I used this step-down voltage regulator in my circuit to reduce the Power Hub's 18V to 12V for the Walthers beacon circuit.



15. The completed lighthouse.



To my surprise, I found the flasher brightness was adjustable with the Power Hub controller. The tower and light house lit up nicely [15, 16].

## RAILWAY EXPRESS TRANSFER STATION

I separated the Walthers Cornerstone Railway Express Agency Transfer Station into floors, and separated each floor into rooms using partitions. This allowed me to keep parts of the structure dark for greater realism.

I mounted three stick-on LEDs to the ceiling of first story ceiling, which doubled as floor for the second story. The pattern continued for the second story, and for the third story where the ceiling doubled as the roof. I installed the LEDs only in those areas I wanted lit, and wired the LEDs for each floor together in parallel, so each floor would use one plugin [18].



16. With the lights on.



With its large windows and open loading dock doors, this structure demanded interior detail, which really brought the structure to life [19-22].

## JUST PLUG VEHICLES

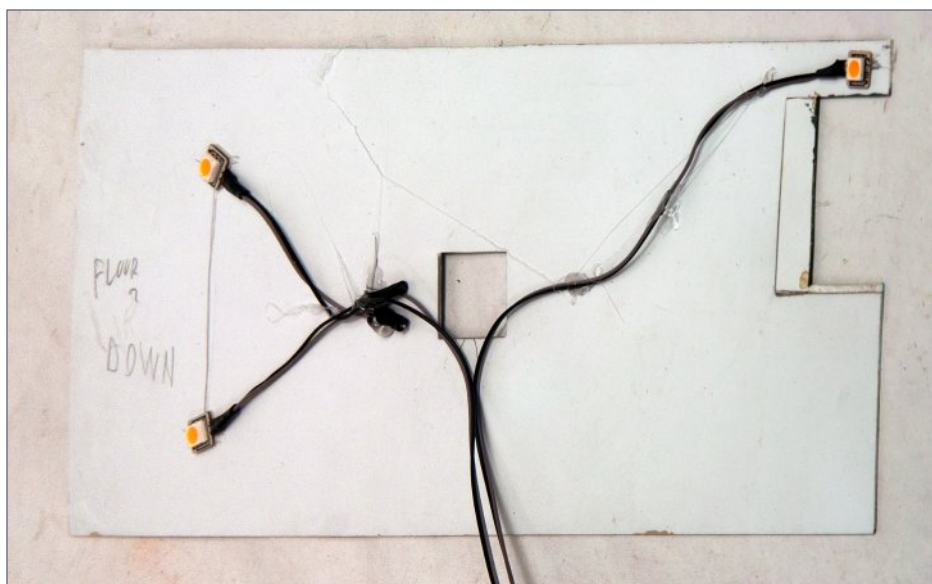
Just Plug vehicles have operating head and tail lights for enhanced night time realism. Several vehicles are available.

In addition, Woodland Scenics offers several built-up structures with pre-installed Just Plug lighting. The Betty's Burning Building even includes flickering LEDs to represent a fire.

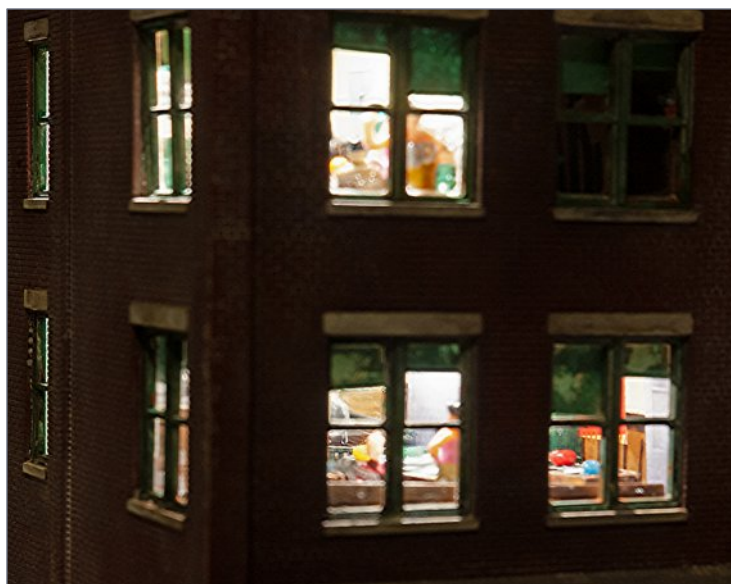


17. A Walther's HO scale Railway Express Transfer Station with interior and platform lighting. Partitions keep parts of the structure dark for greater realism.





18. The ceiling of the first floor has three stick-on LEDs wired in parallel to share a single harness. I covered each of the splices with shrink tubing.



19. Interior details can be seen through the windows. I used self-stick lighting on the ceiling.



20. The stairwell and other side of the office end.



21. A view of the platform. Interior lighting and open doors reveal a busy interior.



22. The platform on the other side.



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I bought the Heavy Hauler for my grandson, whose layout does not have the Just Plug system [23]. I used a voltage converter/regulator and bridge rectifier to make correct voltages for these lights. I learned that 7.5 volts will operate Just Plug components at an acceptable level if supplied through a Just Plug resistor, but must be stepped down to 2.75 volts without the resistor.

Put together, the lighting effects for the Heavy Hauler were impressive [24-27].



23. I bought the Heavy Hauler for my grandson.



24. Out of the box.



25. Headlights on. The effect is quite stunning – this is something I have always wanted to do on a layout, and now it is easy.



26. The Heavy Hauler from the rear.



27. Tail lights on.

With the Just Plug system, it is easy to add light to your layout's structures and vehicles. It adds an extra touch that brings those miniature scenes to life. ☑

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## MIKE TYLICK MMR



Michael has been fooling with electric trains for as long as he can remember. Never one to commit to a single large project, he has instead built a number of smaller layouts of various types and in various scales over the years. He is a “skipped generation” in a railroad family. Mike’s grandfather was a carpenter for the Jersey Central, his father a marine engineer for the Erie, his son an Associate Vice President

with BNSF. Michael is a retired inner-city art teacher. He has been a long time contributor to many publications including *Model Railroader*, *Classic Toy Trains*, *Railroad Model Craftsman*, the *National Model Railroad Association* national, regional and division publications, and most recently *Model Railroad Hobbyist* and *Garden Trains Annual*. He also has delivered numerous clinics and presentations on various railroad and historical subjects on all levels in different parts of the country.

Railroad interests are leaning toward prototype rail and architectural photography, and Mike is becoming keenly aware of what can be observed outside the basement. Much of his hobby time is now spent employed as a custom builder specializing in railroad structures and rolling stock, and has worked with several businesses who build custom model railroads. He formed RailDesign Services, focusing on the design and visual aspects of model railroading.

Michael now lives in eastern Massachusetts and is working on an On30 layout loosely based on the New Haven Railroad’s Old Colony Lines. He is honored to be named NMRA Master Model Railroader #523. ■

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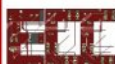
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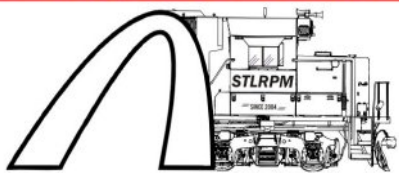


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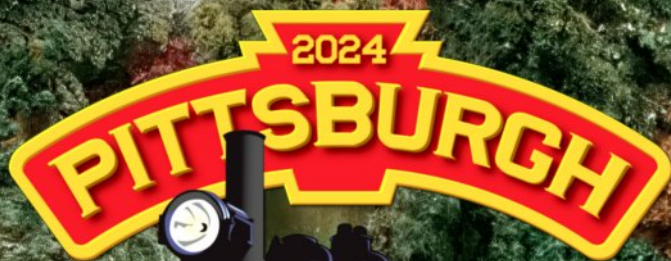
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# ***The Ohio Valley Lines: 1***

**JOE FUGATE VISITS THIS PITTSBURGH HO CLUB  
LAYOUT ...**



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The Ohio Valley Lines club features an HO layout upstairs and an N scale layout in the basement. *Part 2 in May* will cover the N scale layout.

1. A BNSF fast freight speeds over a Western Pennsylvania tall steel trestle on the Ohio Valley Lines HO club layout. This layout will be open for tour at the Pittsburgh National Narrow Gauge convention in September.



**THE OHIO VALLEY LINES CLUB LAYOUT IN THE GREATER PITTSBURGH AREA** will be open for tours during September 2024 as part of the 2024 National Narrow-Gauge Convention. To learn more about this convention / to register, please visit this website: [44nngc.com](http://44nngc.com).

I visited the Ohio Valley Lines Club in late February 2024 and toured the layout, taking photos and video. I sat down with Frank Kocher, chairman of the club's board of directors. I first touched on his journey in the hobby and then moved on to discussing the club's HO layout.

**MRH:** Frank, before we get into the details of this club layout, let's learn more about you. How did you first get started in the hobby?

**Frank Kocher:** I grew up with trains under the Christmas tree. We lived in a ranch house and my dad was big on trains. We had a layout in the basement – it was three or four sheets of four by eight plywood. I didn't want to put it away at the end of Christmas!

This led to me starting my own layout in HO rather than the O gauge Lionel trains. I built my layout in a back room of the basement and worked on it regularly. As we grew up, I wound up with the HO trains, but my brother got the Lionel Trains [laughs].



**Frank Kocher**

So trains were a big tradition in my family..





1a. The Ohio Valley Lines club is located in the Ambridge area of greater Pittsburgh. Their website can be found here: [ohiovalleylines.org](http://ohiovalleylines.org).

**MRH:** How did you progress in the hobby from there?

**Frank:** When I got married, the hobby went by the side. Getting a new job, you know, things kept you busy. One day my dad took me down to a hobby shop called Ether's in Millville, PA. I found an old wooden Ambroid kit. I'd never heard of those before. It was scale wood you had a cut and go by blueprints.

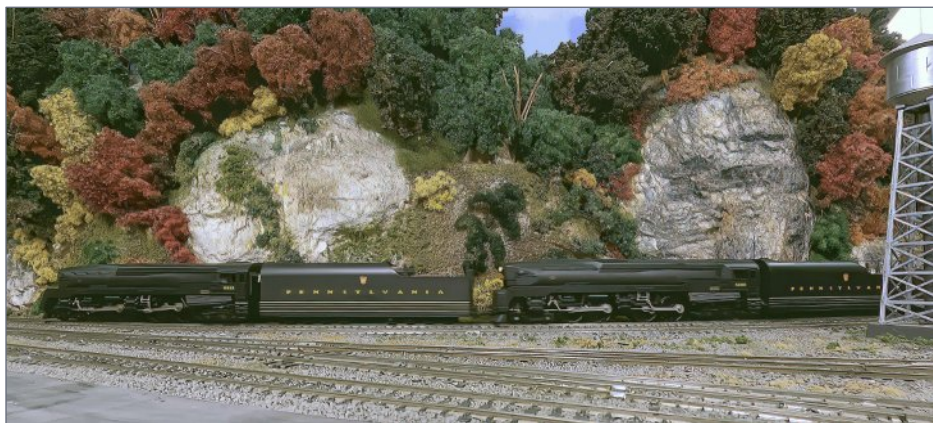
I picked that kit up and it kept me quite busy. Looking back, I made some silly errors on it, particularly not weighting it properly. I wasn't really knowledgeable about that back then. Eventually, I found this club.

**MRH:** And what happened once you found this club?

**Frank:** I joined here in 1985 – and if you do the math, that's now 39 years I've been with this organization.



2. When you first walk into the HO club's layout space, you see a long yard peninsula off to your left. At the far end is this engine terminal on the club's "lower line."



3. Naturally, the club features plenty of vintage Pennsylvania Railroad trains such as this double-headed passenger train.



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**4. Log train drifts downgrade in the wilds of Western Pennsylvania on the lower line. In the distance, you can see the upper line.**

We've grown over the years and we've changed locations.

The club started before I joined – it started out in basements and garages as modules and eventually they did a show in one of the township fire halls close to here. When I encountered them, they were using the basement of the post office for the modular layout that they had developed.

I into the club the last year just before they got bumped out of the post office basement. We rented a place a few blocks away from here in Ambridge, a space over a body shop.

**MRH:** How did the club finally end up in this space?

**Frank:** The body shop space worked very well for us – we were there for maybe five years. During that time, we developed public open houses during the holiday season. That helped financially too, to pay the bills and keep everything alive. Then in 1999 we moved here.

This was a big deal because we were no longer renting. We bought this place, which meant we didn't need to do modules and always be concerned over being bumped out again. This place was ours and we could stay put.

This let us completely rethink putting together a train layout. We could do a lot more interesting things since we didn't have to be prepared to rip it down and move.

We moved here in October 1999, and the following year we started building the first parts of the layout. We had a do without our open houses for several years. We did have some N-trak displays though, thanks to our N scale group (*MRH will be covering this segment of the club in the May MRH - ed*).

They set up their modules, giving us at least some kind of train display. We did that for two years until we had enough of our own layout completed that we could do a show with the HO layout.

**MRH: So tell us about the HO layout, what are you trying to model here.**

**Frank:** We designed the layout to be representative of Western Pennsylvania – the type of hilly terrain and kind of businesses that you find in Western Pennsylvania. We're not trying to model exact places such as a specific building or industry. We have a couple things that are very similar to the prototype, but we grant a lot leeway in building the layout scenes.

One thing I'm really glad that we've done is make the train layout interactive for our open house audience. Not only will our engineers talk and walk around the layout with our patrons, they take the time to explain what different things are. We also provide buttons that activate scenes around the layout, with animation and sound effects. We probably have about twenty of those.

To keep everybody involved, we also hand out a list of things to locate on the layout. Folks really get into it, going along with a pencil and checking things off as they find them.

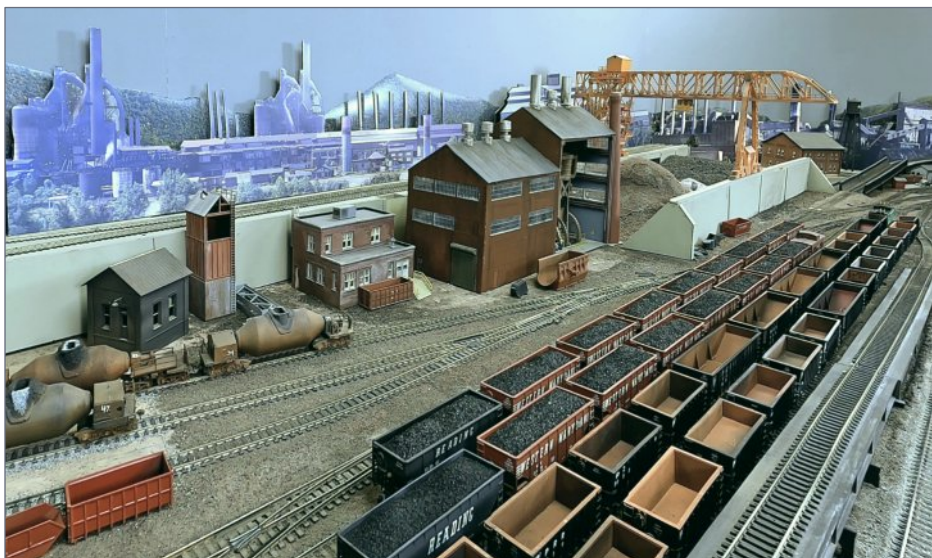




5. A Pittsburgh layout would not be complete without featuring steel production. The Ohio Valley HO club layout has one side of an entire peninsula dedicated to steel mill facilities.



6. On one end of the steel mill peninsula is this blast furnace that extends almost all the way to the ceiling.



7. Looking down the peninsula from the blast furnace you can see yards for coke and iron ore storage. In the distance you can see dock ore unloading facilities.



8. Along the backdrop in [7] is this blower engine house. It's animated and operates at the press of a button.



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**9. Another animated scene features a steam-powered oil derrick that operates. Just push the button!**

They get down to the end of the list and say, "Well, I missed this. Where is it?" This gives us yet another opportunity to dialog with the people because they have more questions!

**MRH: That's absolutely brilliant, the way you cater to your audience during shows. Tell us more about the animations.**

**Frank:** One of the things I like best about the layout is all the animations that we've included. Some are quite sophisticated. For example, there's a night scene in the area that we refer to as Pittsburgh that has extensive lightning and sound effects, including a thunder storm with lightening. It dims the room lights and brings up the lights in the town and the street lights. A lighted trolley also runs through the scene. Periodically, you will see flashes of light, then hear the thunder.

I get excited about this animation. Sometimes I'll just go over there and even though I've seen it hundreds of times, I'll push the button to let it run through again [laughs].



10. Looking down the peninsula from the blast furnace you can see yards for coke and iron ore storage. In the distance you can see dock or unloading facilities.



11. If you press the Water Tower button on the fascia, the spout lowers, you can hear the water gurgling out and filling a tender tank, then the flow stops and the spout retracts back up. Of course, it helps to have a loco there!



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**MRH:** How often do you host open house shows for the public?

**Frank:** Once a year we have a long-running open house season so the public can come in and view the layout. We run Thanksgiving weekend through the holiday season, ending the first or second weekend of January.

We try to make it interesting for our patrons by having a lot of interactive things on the layout and also being interactive ourselves. A lot of places that open to public display, you pay your money, you walk through, say, “oh, that’s nice,” but you really don’t get the chance to ask questions or talk to the hosts.

Our club is a lot different in that area. We want our members to be accessible. Our operators will talk while they’re running their trains, and give you some idea of what’s going on. We have other members who are not running trains designated to walk around the layout and talk to visitors, to answer any questions they may have and to promote getting engaged with the layout.

As I’ve mentioned, we also have a list of things to look for on the layout. It’s a fun thing that promotes a lot of interaction between our patrons and the club members.

**MRH:** Hindsight is always 20-20 they say. Looking back with what you know now, do you feel the club should have done anything different?

**Frank:** Size-wise, I think we’re at our limits. We would be eliminating the aisles if we got the layout much bigger and people would have a hard time getting around. I think size-wise we’re good.

If we thought about it, we might change some of the track arrangements. But I can’t think of a specific change that I would make off the top of my head. We have had some members say they would like to add this or add that.

We are 99% done laying track on the layout – there’s not much room left [laughs]. This can be frustrating but the limitation

helps us channel our energy into new projects in other ways. Due to the constraints, when we work to improve the layout, we're doing projects we wouldn't have suspected before.

For example, we changed all the lights in the room to be dimmable LED lights, which gives us the chance to have night scenes that we had never thought of doing before.

**MRH:** Sounds like the club has grown a lot in recent years.

**Frank:** Yes, our membership has grown to a point now we're somewhere around 35 members and we're running out of space for members' equipment in staging. We like to have a track or two for each member to place their trains on the layout. And most of the guys like to leave their stuff at the club, rather than taking it off and putting it back on each time they come in.

It's getting to be difficult find room on the layout everybody to put their train on. We're growing beyond our limits in that area. That's our biggest frustration – too much growth!



12. Here's a slightly naughty animation. Push the button and the outhouse door behind the house pops open.



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13. If you press the button on this animation, the enginehouse doors slowly open, pause in the open position, and then close again slowly.



14. On this animation, the left fisherman whips his pole as if casting it again while you press and hold the button.

**MRH:** Belonging to a club must has some challenges beyond just having a home layout doesn't it?

**Frank:** Whenever you've got 30-35 people in a club, you're bound to get people bumping shoulders and who don't agree on certain things. I have to admit, most of the guys in the club have dealt with such disagreements very well.

But sometimes you can walk out of here wondering if you should have stayed home today [laughs]. Most of the time, being a member of this club is very enjoyable for me. But there are times – as you can have with most anything.

If you go golfing, say, you'll have a golfing buddy or two you find you're knocking heads with. It doesn't matter what sport or activity, there's always going to be disagreements and you just learn how to deal with it properly.

**MRH:** Ah, the model railroaders' bane – we need more layout space!

**Frank:** It's a balance – to use all the space we can without overcrowding things. We don't want so much trackwork that there's no room for scenery anymore. I don't think we're at that point.

And if you enlarge the layout too much, then the room for viewing the layout and for working on the layout gets smaller. Then you're bumping into things. We've managed to avoid that pretty well.

**MRH:** Tell us about how you do your scenery.

**Frank:** From the very beginning, we've been depicting the fall season here in Western Pennsylvania. If you look at the two layouts [HO and N scale layouts – MRH will be covering the N scale layout in the May issue – ed.], you can see all the different colors of the trees, the oranges, the yellows, the light greens, and dark greens.

I think of it as modeling the second to third week in October.





15. In this humorous animation scene, when you press and release the button, you can hear banging sounds coming from the reefer, along with muffled cries of “let me out, let me out!.”



16. A hot reefer train rounds the corner into the lower line yard scene shown in [2].

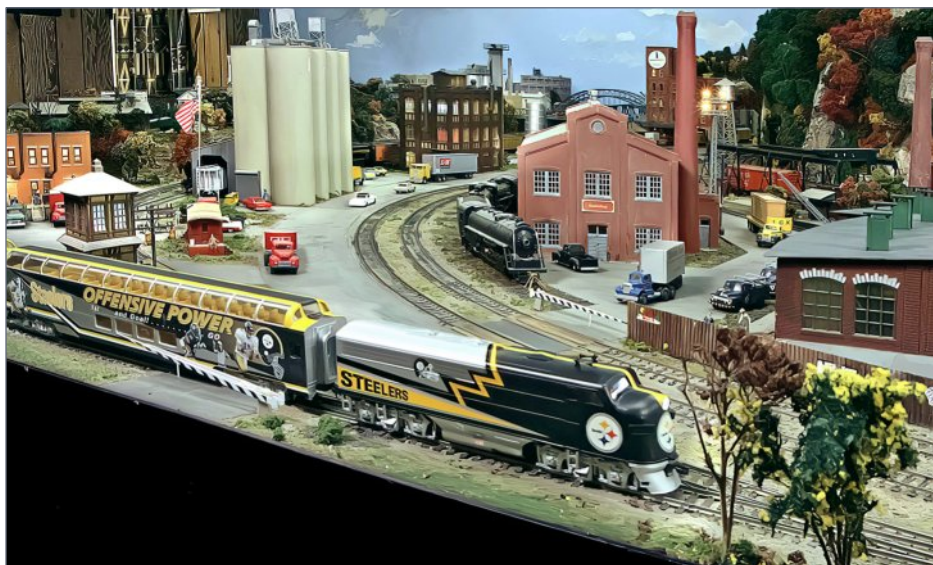
Right when things begin to turn, but the trees haven't completely changed yet. So we're set during the second week of October.

The scenery on our layout comes from several people. One of the great things about belonging to a club is you can draw from a lot of different talents.

If one person builds a layout, they may be good at the electrical, but they may not be good at the scenery. So something may suffer. But in a club, you can draw from all kinds of people.

For example, Bob Evans is our scenery guy. When doing a fall scene on our layout, Bob made thousands of trees for it using dried weeds like goldenrod. They're dried, then sprayed / soaked with matte medium. The result is thousands and thousands of trees!

Bob Evans also did our rock molds. He's done a very nice job on that.



**17. How about a Pittsburgh layout with a train promoting the Pittsburgh Steelers ball team? This attractive train rolls by on the lower line.**





18, 19. These two images illustrate one of the club's most impressive animations. When you press the animation button in the Pittsburgh area, the lights slowly dim, and the structure lights come up. Random structures room lights go on / off at various intervals. Then suddenly, there's a bright flash – and seconds later, thunder rumbles through the scene. Things seem quiet when suddenly another flash and thunder, only with less delay. The entire sequence runs for maybe 7-8 minutes. We've never seen a layout animation like this, it's a real treat!

Other people are good at doing buildings, putting the buildings together, and painting them. Still others are good at putting in the lights and the details. And of course we have folks who are really good with the trackwork.

It all comes together to create a scene, which hopefully everyone will appreciate.

## **MRH: What about the structures on your layout?**

**Frank:** Our structures on the layout come from a variety of people as well.

Let's take the bridges – we have a gentleman, Jerry Joseph, who is very good at 3D printing. One of our bridges he designed and printed with 3D printing, then assembled it – it's a beautiful bridge. Very nice detail.

A lot of our buildings have been around for years. Some of them came from the old layouts before we moved in here. We brought a lot of things with us. We have a lot of kitbashed structures as well. We change the structure to suit where the building will be sitting.

As we get more sophisticated with the layout, we're adding more interior lights that can go on and off. We're really getting into developing night scenes recently.

## **MRH: How have you done your layout backdrops?**

**Frank:** Our backdrops, as with the other things we've discussed, are a combination of things. Some have been hand painted, but that was years and years ago. I don't even remember who did that.

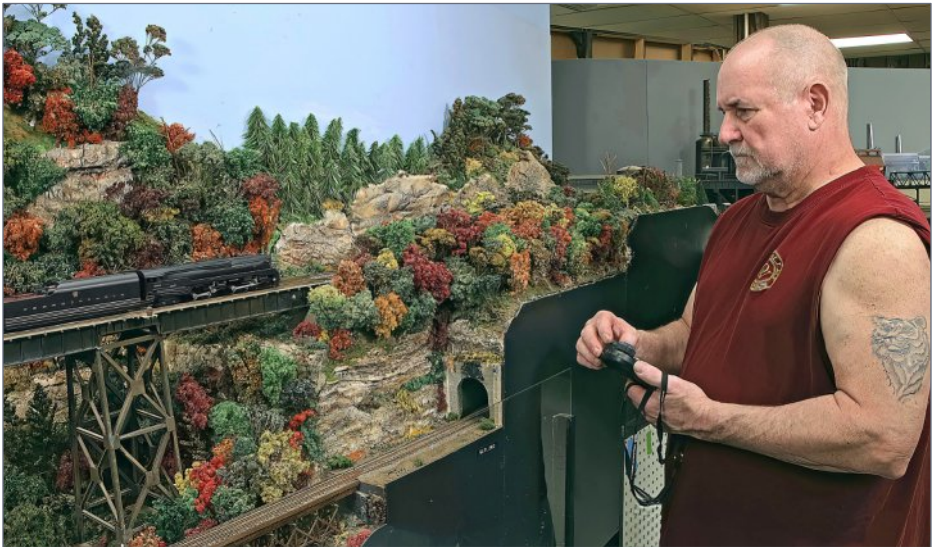
We also had a couple artists come in and do cloud scenes. But that was only one time and they just did one section.

We also have printed backdrops that we've cut out and pasted to the walls. So we have a variety of backdrops here.

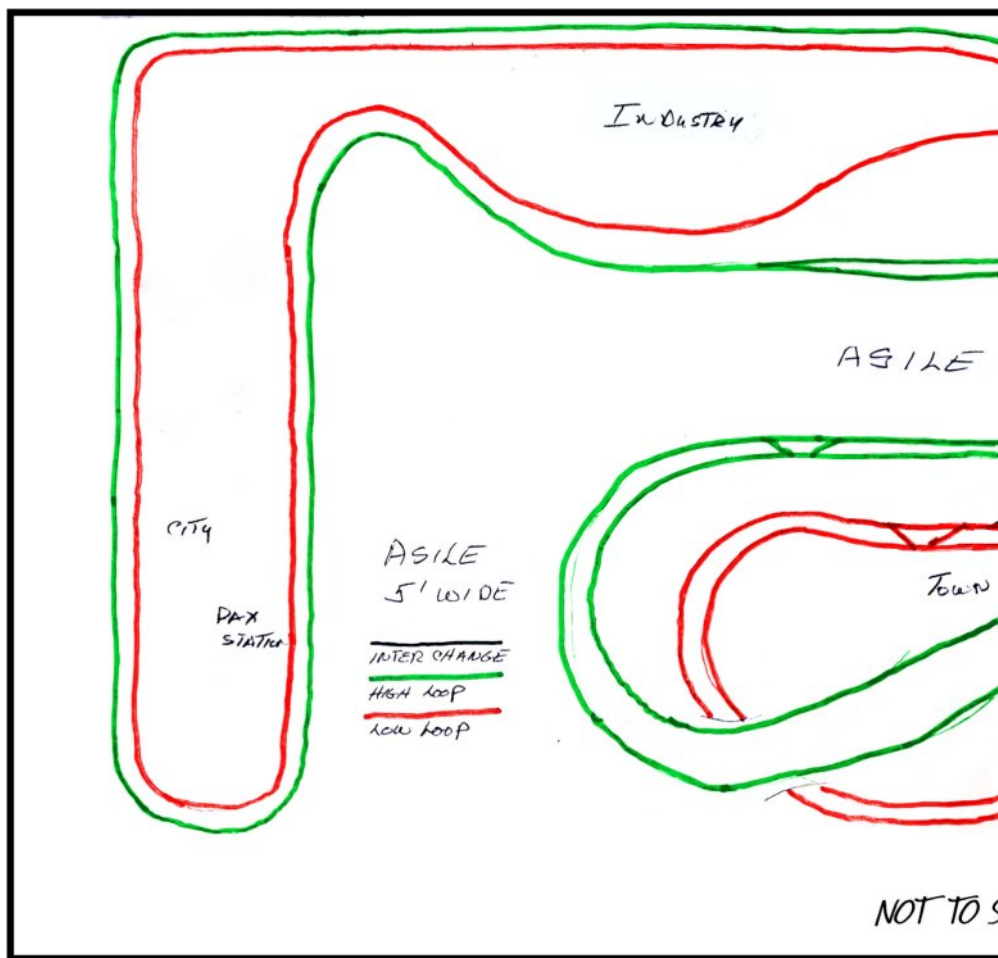




20. Club member Jake Dillam demonstrates one of the club's "hidden control panels" pullout drawer slide control pannes for controlling the staging track turnouts and track power.



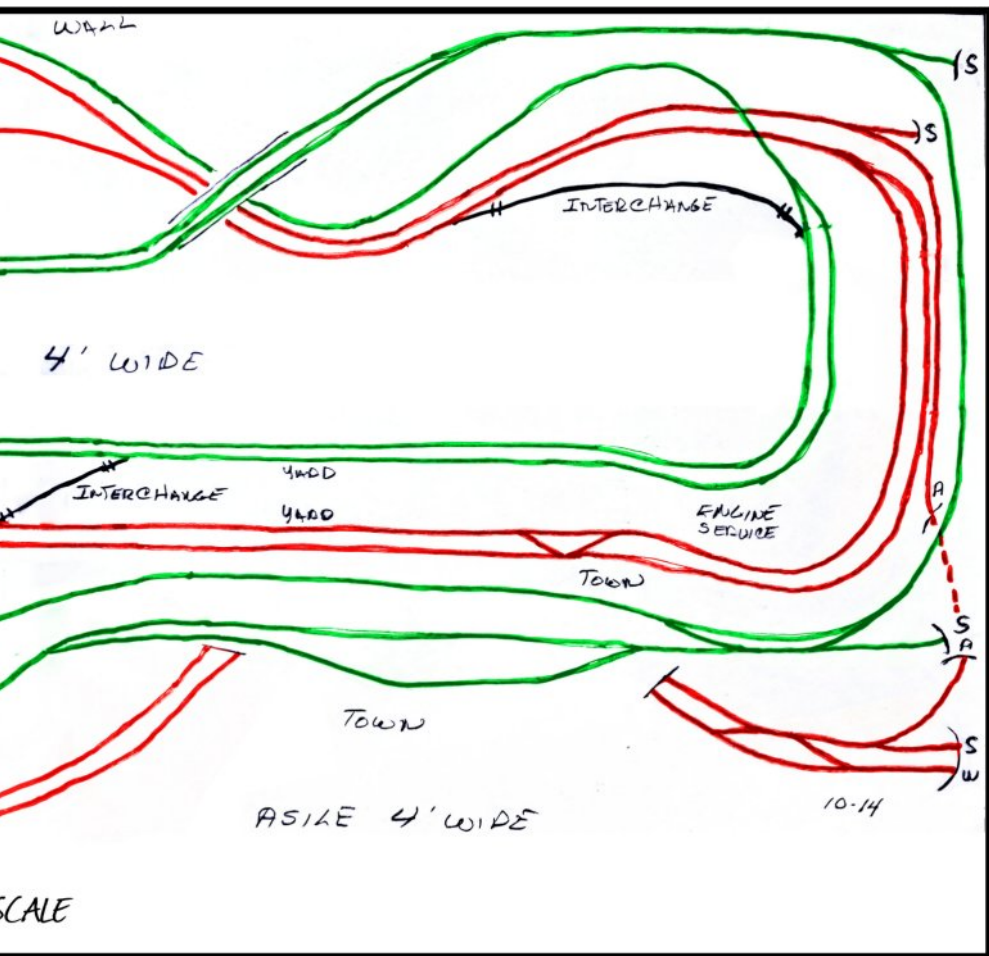
21. Club member Bill Lewis runs a vintage passenger train across the tall steel trestle seen in [1].



22. The club has no track plan per se, but they do have this general hand-drawn schematic to show how they planned the layout track routing. They built the benchwork to fit a general G configuration and then planned the actual track location as they laid the track on the benchwork.

Basically, the layout has two lines, the high line and the low line, with two interchange connections between them. Below this level, there's an extensive staging level – you can see the staging level in [20].





The S/W connections go to down to the under-the-benchwork staging.

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**MRH: What do you use to control the trains?**

**Frank:** Our control system for the layout right now is Digitrax. We've used Digitrax since we started the new layout in 1999 – it's a nice system. We like it.

Everybody has their own controller and each engine on the layout has a unique two- or four-digit code to control that specific engine. It's so much more flexible than our old DC layout control system was.

**MRH: You host the open houses each year during the holidays. But do you also host op sessions where you try to run trains more realistically?**

**Frank:** When we have a show, we're basically just running in circles. We aim to keep everything moving so that our patrons can always see something interesting. We also have times where members can come in and run trains on their own.

Some of the members just want to railfan their trains and see them run. Others want to be a little more involved and have what we call operating sessions. These are somewhat limited right now because as I mentioned we're running out of space in staging for every member's equipment.

We do have serious operations and want to move cars from one yard to another yard or make spots at industries, you need empty spots in those yards and industries to accept the those cars. With our overcrowded layout, such operation becomes difficult because there's not enough room to maneuver.

We would like to see more serious operations. Whether we'll be able to do it or not, I'm not so sure [laughs].

**MRH: Any further thoughts on how to do a club well?**

**Frank:** Occasionally club members can interact in ways that are less positive than you might want. We do have people who want to do things differently, hoping to see us make changes to the layout.



In some organizations, the vice president is a stand-in for the president when he's not there. Here, our vice president is in charge of the layout. If there's any changes folks would like to see made, it has to be run through our vice president and he gives a thumbs up or thumbs down.

So keeping the peace in a club is not always easy. There can be various personalities, so the way you handle some folks can vary. Even if you're giving them a negative answer, you need to find a positive way of keeping them on board. So it can be tricky, but it's been working out very well here.

One of the real values of a club is being able to find somebody with the expertise you need. You can bounce your questions off folks and track down a member who knows and has answers that otherwise might be hard to get.

You can find someone with almost whatever skill you need, whether it's electrical, or scenery, or buildings, or operations. Somebody knows that subject area. A club like this is the place where you can find the answers! ☑



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 PCR24**

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One clinic room will be in a hosted Zoom meeting. Virtual participants will choose clinics for the virtual tracks.



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Join an MMR moderated tour of the PCR contest room. See great modeling and have expert analysis of the models that are set for judging.

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Hosts will take virtual attendees along on the Prototype tours. A knowledgeable host will join both the SPCRR and Niles Canyon tours with an iPhone/gimbal in Zoom.



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Virtual Train Show with vendor segments

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Breakouts were one of the best parts of the 2021 National. At PC20-24, there will be Birds of a Feather, Vendor, SIGs and more in breakouts - see old friends, make new ones, meet vendors and more!!!!



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 the heart of Silicon Valley**

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[pcrnmra.net/conv2024/join-the-on-line-virtual-convention](http://pcrnmra.net/conv2024/join-the-on-line-virtual-convention)



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# A modern monopole billboard for your layout



Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2024



**ANDREAS RITTERSHOFER** SCRATCHBUILDS A  
MODERN BILLBOARD WITH STYRENE ...

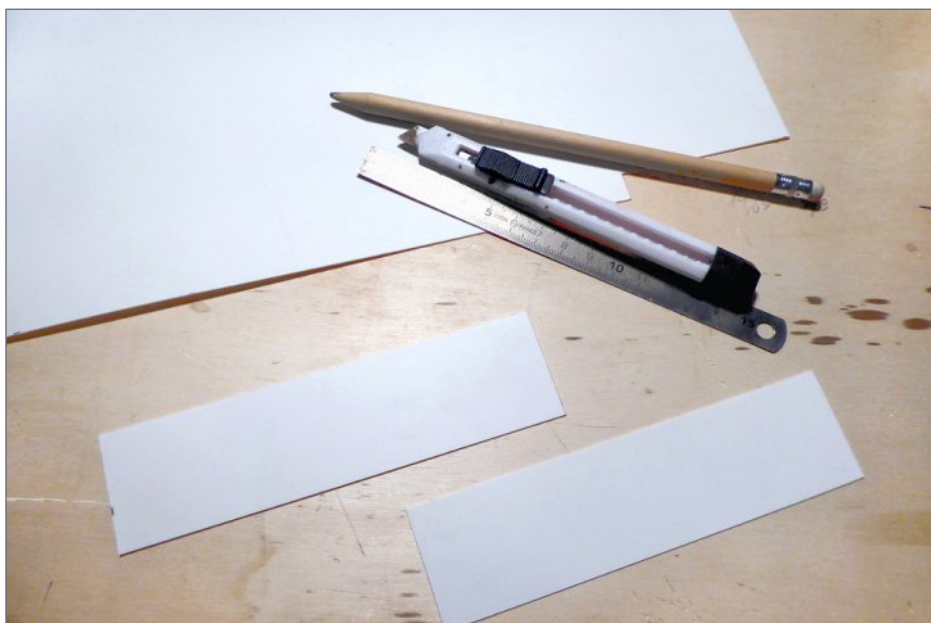
**I BUILT A MODERN-ERA BILLBOARD FOR MY HO SWITCHING** layout, so I decided to document it for you. I built this steel monopole billboard structure using styrene. All dimensions are in scale feet so you can build this model in any scale.

*Historical note: It appears monopole billboards were introduced in the late 1970s, and became popular in the 1980s.*

I cut two pieces of 0.010" sheet styrene 10' tall by 40' long for the billboard surfaces, which would hold the advertisements [1].

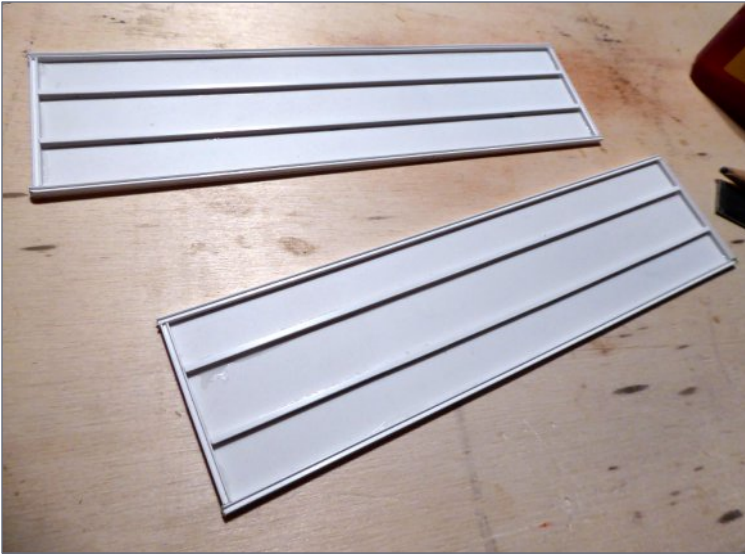
To add support to the backs of these billboards, I glued 0.060" styrene C-channel face-up around the edges. I ran two more rows of C-channel lengthwise facing down, one 3' from the top edge, the other 3' from the bottom edge [2].

Next, I added six 1/8" square-tube styrene verticals cut a scale 14' long on top of the bracing. I put the two first verticals 2' from the

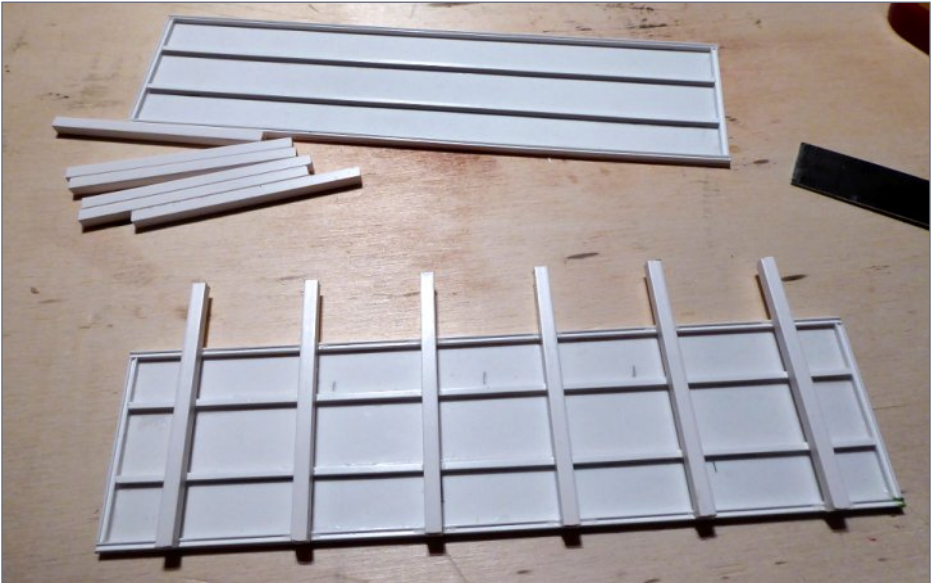


**1. Two billboard panels cut from 0.010" styrene sheet.**





2. I added 0.060" C-channel to the backs of the billboards to stiffen them.



3. I added 1/8" square tubing uprights to the back of the billboards.

outside edge of the billboard, then spaced the other four verticals 6' apart on center [3].



A. Rittershofer

## SOURCE FOR BILLBOARD GRAPHICS

Here's how I found some billboard graphics to put on my billboards.

I'm using Google image search, looking for "billboard." There are a lot of large, good-quality images there, but you also can make pictures by yourself. In any case you will need to do some image manipulation to get to the right size and to the correct aspect ratio. Some trial-and-error may be needed to get your artwork to fit.

I affixed the ads to the billboard with a tacky glue so they will be removable – see the shopping list at the end of this article.

## WALKWAYS

For the upper rear walkway, I first added 0.040" styrene rod along the top of the billboard back as a handrail [4]. I'm using plastic JTT tread plate from Micro-Mark for the walkway [4] – see the shopping list at the end of the article.

I cut the walkway three scale feet wide and glued 0.040" x 0.030" (HO scale 4x3) styrene strips underneath along the edges.

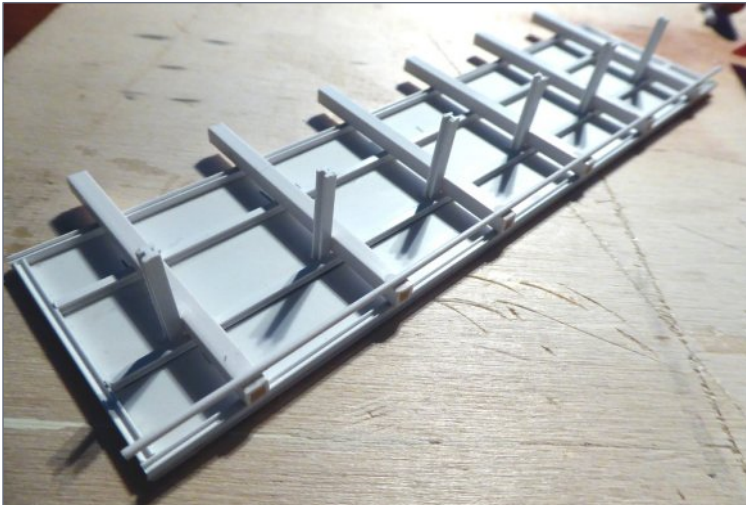
In the foreground of [4] you can see an already completed walkway with the longitudinal 3x4 supports glued to the bottom. The white and silver color contrast may look stark, but after applying primer and color it looked okay. I needed to be careful to not fill up the fine mesh with paint – but I'm getting ahead of myself. Back to the build.

I added Plastruct 3/32" styrene H-beams projecting out perpendicular from the back of the billboard as supports for the





4. I used plastic JTT tread plate from Micro-Mark for the walkways. In the background you can see the 0.040" styrene rod handrail I added to the top of the billboard bracing.



5. I added 3/32" Plastruct H-beams as walkway supports.

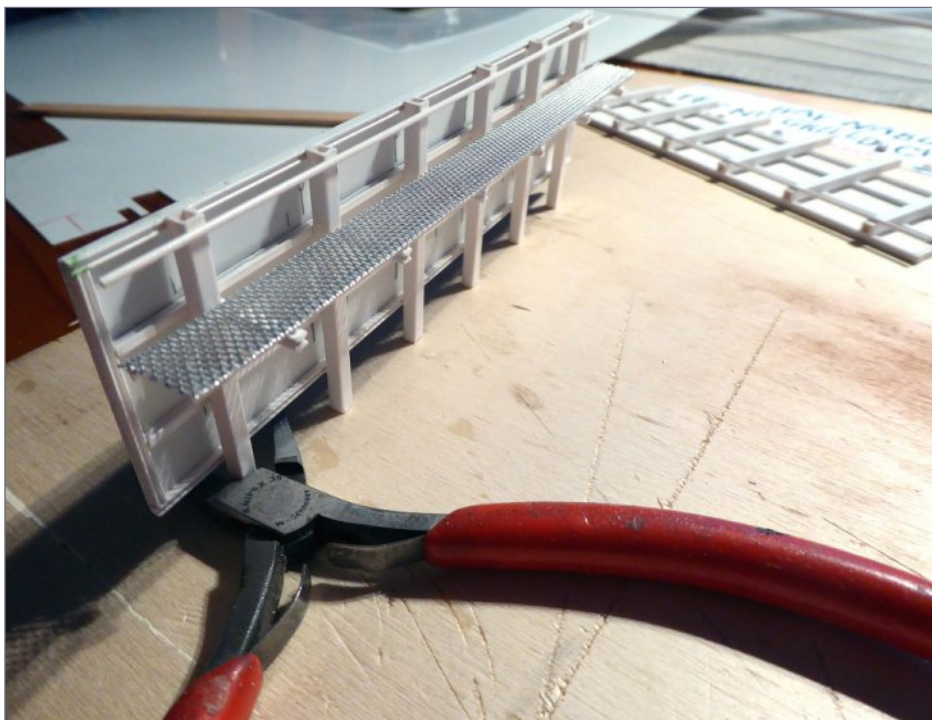
walkway [5]. I cut them long enough (4'-10" total length to the back of the billboard) so they extend 3'-6" beyond the verticals to support the 3' wide walkway with an extra 6" beyond.

This construction method results in a very sturdy model – just in case somebody bumps it while switching the layout.

I glued the walkway onto the back of each billboard as shown in [6]. You can see both rear walkways in [7].

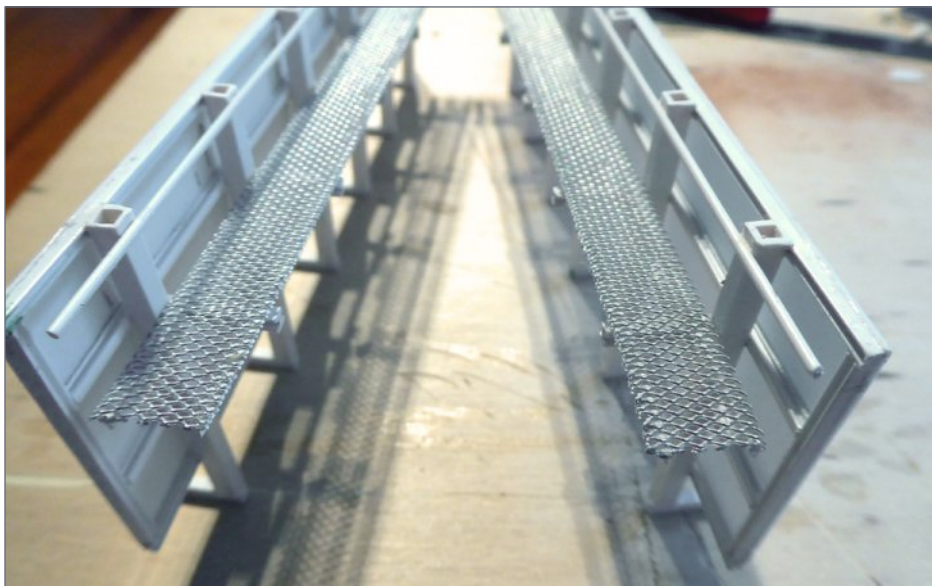
Next, I moved to the front-side bottom walkways. For supports, I cut Plastruct 3/32" styrene H-beams 4'-6" long and glued them to the bottom of the 1/8" square tube uprights [8].

For the front-side walkways, I cut tread material 3' wide and 44' long to extend 4' past the 40'-long billboard – to the left on one billboard

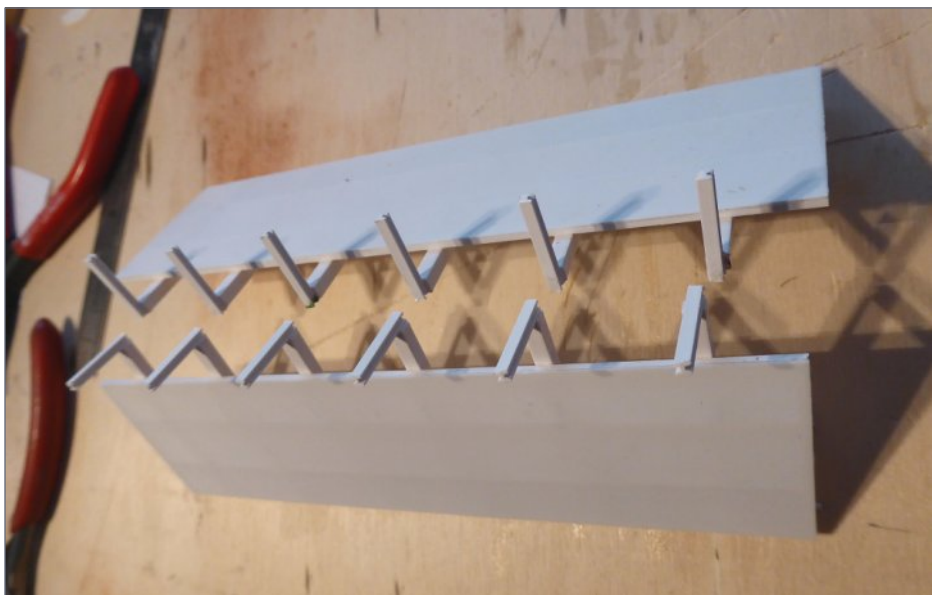


6. Rear walkway glued onto the supports.





7. Both rear walkways glued in place.



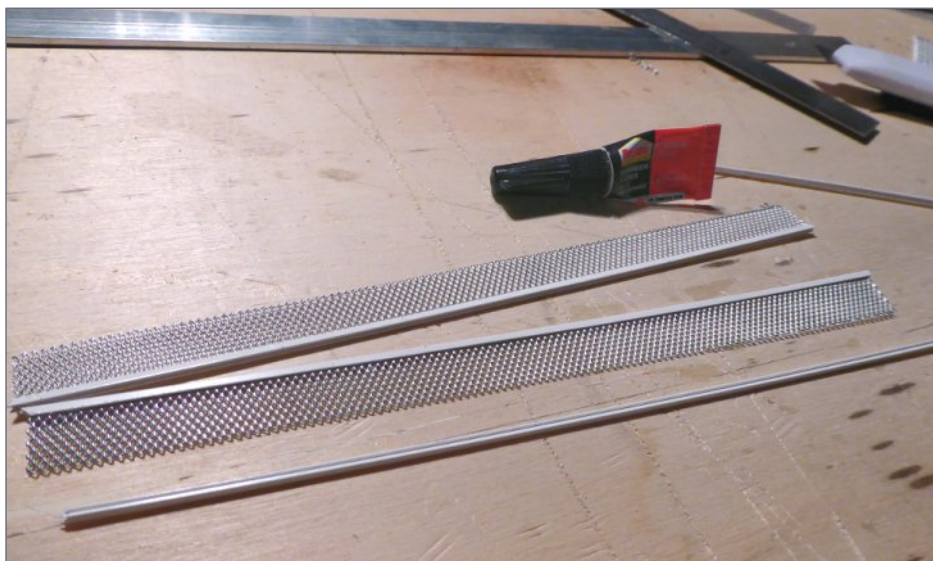
8. Front walkway supports added using Plastruct 3/32" H-beams.

and extend 4' to the right on the other billboard. Since the billboards will be mounted back-to-back, this puts the 3' front walkway extension past the same end on both billboards in the final assembly.

I used 0.060" C-channel and applied them as edging around the entire perimeter of the walkway tread [9]. I mitered the C-channel corners at a 45-degree angle to get a neat fit completely around the edge of the walkway tread.

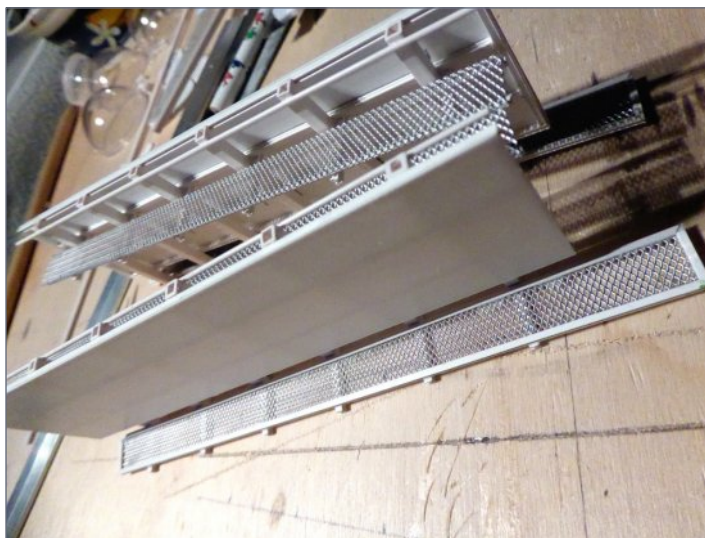
## ADDING THE CENTER BEAM

To build the center beam that supports the two billboards, I drew a center line, then I drew two 40' angled lines to mark the position of the back-to-back billboards on the cross beams. I spaced one end 7.5 feet from center line (15 feet total distance), and the other end 3.5 feet from center line (7 feet total distance), forming an angle [11].



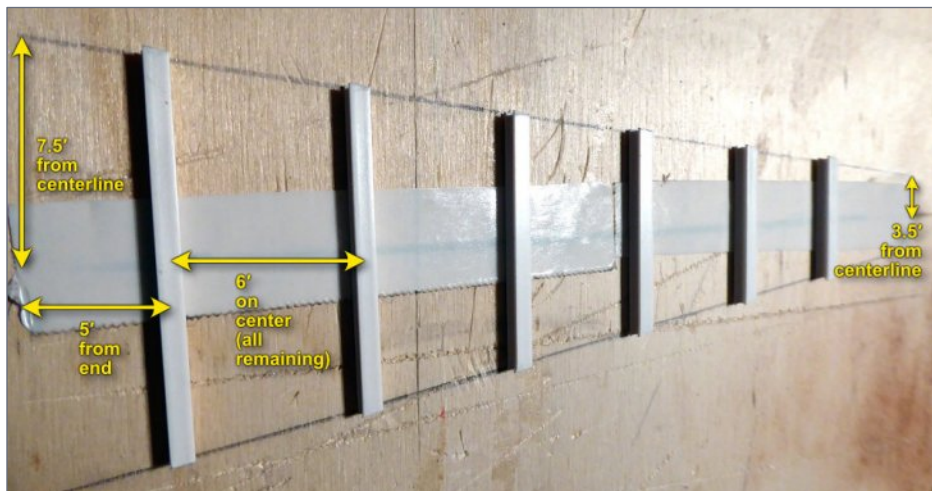
**9. Front side walkways with 0.060" C-channel edging being added all the way around.**





10. Front walkway glued in place. The billboard in the front extends to the right beyond the billboard, while the other billboard walkway extends to the left – when they're placed

back-to-back as shown, the extensions match.

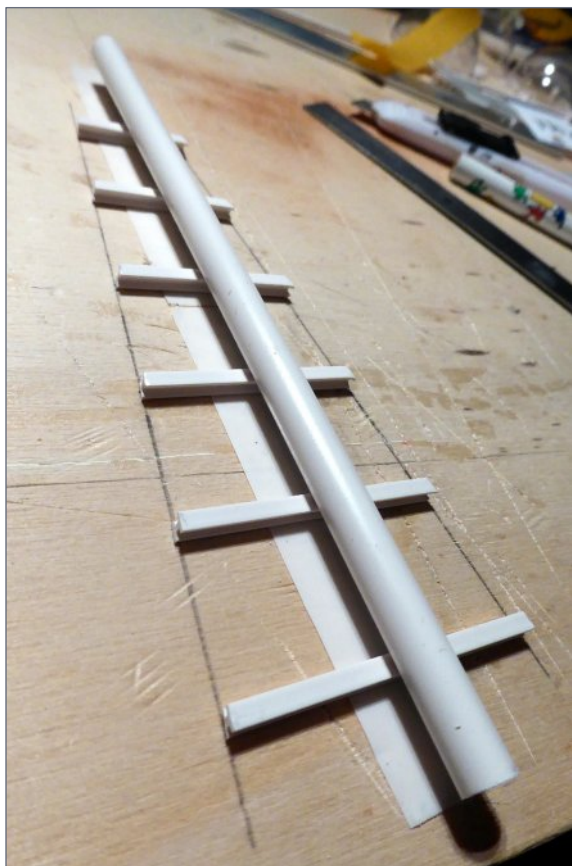


11. I cut a piece of double-sided tape a scale 40' long and put it down on a 40' long center line. Then I drew angled lines to mark where the billboards will go – 7.5 feet from the center line on the near end and 3.5 feet from the center line in the back, setting the billboards at an angle.

I measured 5' in from one end, then marked the location of the first cross beam. I made five more marks spaced 6' apart for the remaining cross beams. I added a piece of double-stick tape cut 40 scale feet long down the middle between the marks.

I placed Plastruct 3/32" styrene H-beams crossways along the double-sided tape, spaced 6' apart on center. The lines marked the ends of the cross beams, so I cut the H-beams at an angle to fit using the lines as a guide [11].

Next, I glued a 1/4" round tube center beam 40' long on top of them – later this assembly will be turned upside-down [12].



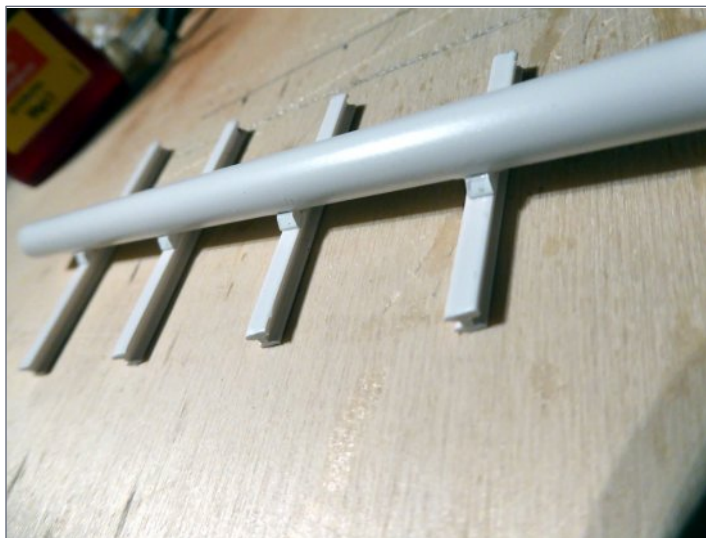
12. I glued a 1/4" styrene tube 40' long on top of the cross beams along the center line.



As with the prototype, the joints between cross beams and round center beam needed bracing. I cut  $3/32''$  square styrene strip down the middle [13] at an angle to get two triangular pieces. From these I cut triangular braces a scale 8" long [14]. Adding this bracing greatly stiffened the joints.



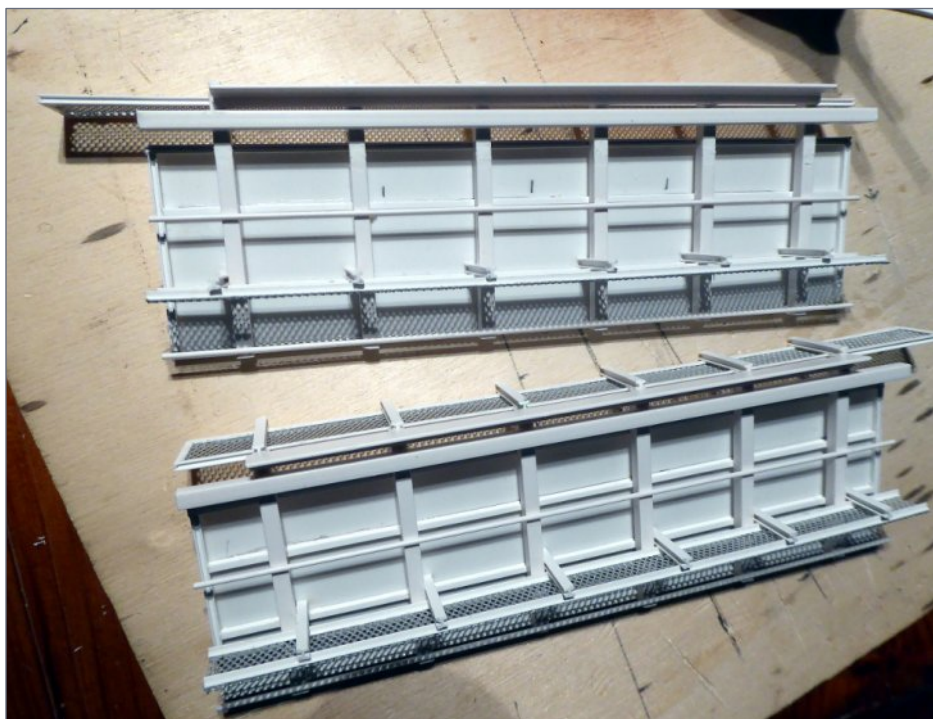
13. I cut triangular pieces from  $3/32''$  square styrene by splitting it down the middle.



14. Adding the triangular bracing I cut from  $3/32''$  square styrene [see 13].

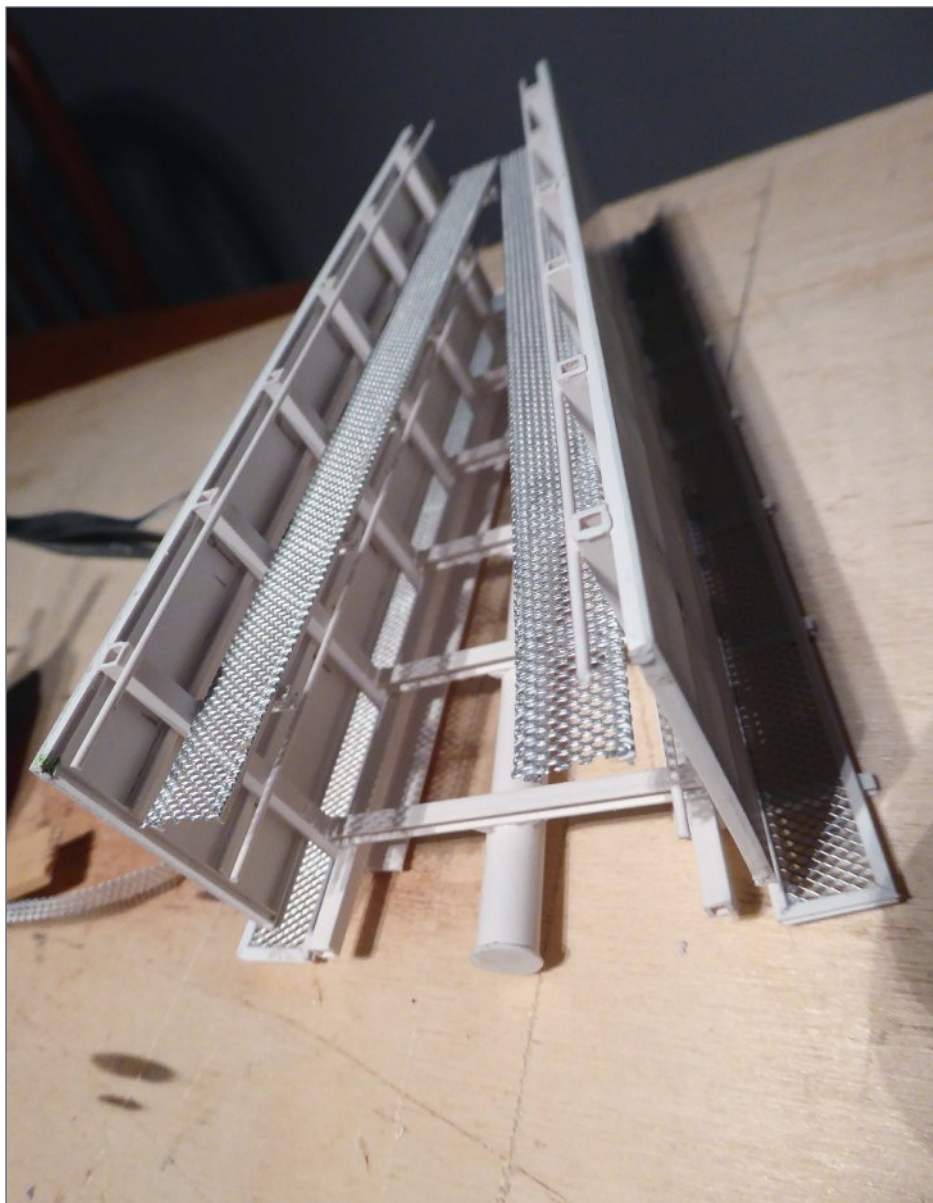
To add strength to the rear framing, I glued a second 0.040" round rod just above the lower C-channel longitudinal beams on the back. I also glued a 40' long piece of 1/8" square tube one foot below the back edge of the billboard. Finally, I glued a 30' long piece of 1/8" L angle along the bottom back of the uprights, just behind the front walkway [15].

Finally, I glued both billboards together with the connecting cross beams and the center beam below them. I added a 0.010" round cap to each end of the round center beam to seal it. I cut the cap slightly larger than the 1/4" diameter round center beam, to allow it to overhang a scale inch or two [16].



15. I added additional bracing to the back.





16. Billboards glued to the center beam. I added a 0.010" styrene cap to the end of the round center beam. I cut it slightly larger than the  $\frac{1}{4}$ " tubing and allowed it to overhang the tubing a bit.

For the vertical support post, I used 1/2" styrene tube. I marked the vertical to put the bottom of the billboard at 30' from the ground, then cut the vertical to 45 feet long, giving me an extra 15' below ground level to provide stability.

I cut a rounded slot in the top to fit the 1/4" round center beam [18]. I temporarily set the billboard assembly on its post into a half-inch hole I drilled to see how it would look in its "natural habitat."

With the outside walkway complete, I added more detail on the narrow end of the billboard. I added a small piece of walkway between the two billboards, supported on H channel. I added a handrail I kitbashed from a piece of HO Plastruct handrail, and a ladder behind one of the billboards [18].



17. I added a 1/2" styrene vertical support post. I cut a 1/4" notch in the top of the post, see [18].





18. Billboard assembly on the top of its  $\frac{1}{2}$ " styrene tube monopole support. The billboard's center beam rests in a  $\frac{1}{4}$ ", rounded notch in the top of the pole. I also added more detail to the narrow end of the sign assembly.

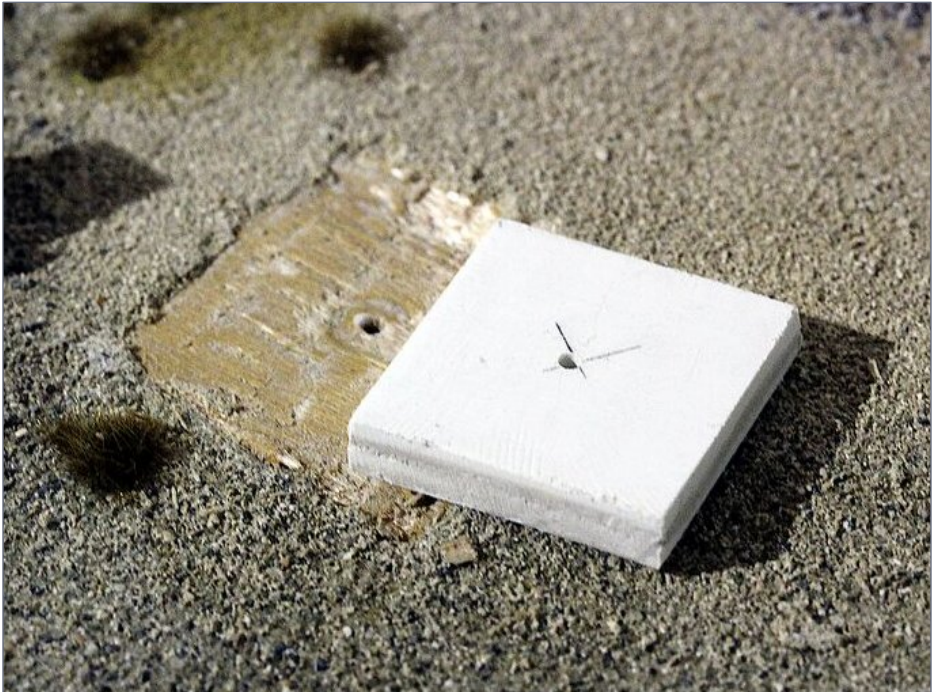
Next up, adding lights and final painting.

## MOUNTING ON THE LAYOUT

The lighting wires run down the middle of the sign and into the support hole. I first turned my attention to the support hole and finishing it.

I made a concrete base plate by laminating two layers of 0.060" sheet styrene to get a piece 0.120" thick [19]. I cut the base 8' square and drilled a half-inch hole in the middle for the monopole.

The base plate should look like concrete, so I colored it after finishing it, and glued it down [20]. I repaired the scenery around the base plate, making it look like it had been there a while [21].



**19. I made the base plate from styrene – it will represent concrete.**





20. I painted the base plate a dark concrete gray, and drilled a hole in the center.



21. Base plate embedded into the ground with finished scenery around it.

It took me a while to devise a solution for securely mounting the billboard on top of the pole. I felt simply gluing it wouldn't be enough.

Finally, I went with a 1/8"-40 threaded rod inside the pole from top to bottom to clamp the billboard to the pole. I secured the nuts with superglue. It worked as expected!

To make the top of the pole look more realistic and cover the out-of-scale rod and nuts, I made a cover to slide on top of the pole from a 3' length of 1/2" styrene tube [23]. I glued two sets of 1/4" styrene angle on each side. Finally, I added a top cover from 0.010" styrene sheet.

The maintenance personnel needed to reach the billboard using a ladder on the side. I had some O scale photo-etched ladders from Walthers [24], so I soldered 0.020" (24AWG) brass wires to two 10'



22. I securely fastened the billboard assembly onto the monopole using a 1/8"-40 threaded rod, nuts, and square sheet metal "washers." You can see the other end in [33].



sections to act as standoffs. I drilled #75 holes into the monopole to mount the ladder.

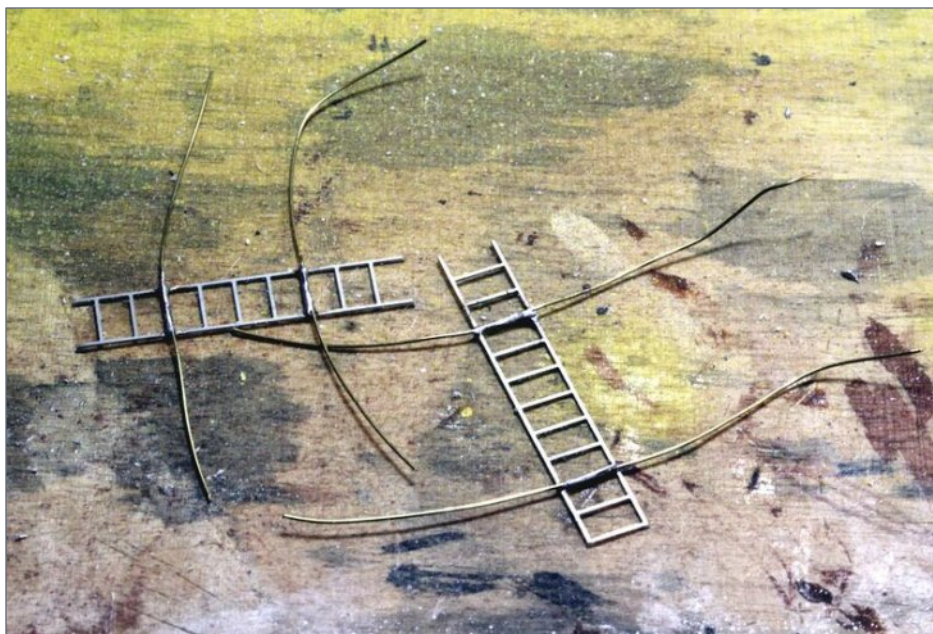
This allowed me to mount the ladder on top end of the central pole [25] for the top 20' of length. The bottom of the ladder ends 10' above the ground to prevent unauthorized people from climbing.

I also added some fake electrical details to the billboard assembly – something looking like an electrical cabinet, along with fake wiring [26].

I wanted something “interesting” at the bottom of the pole, so I used OpenSCAD to design a 3D part inspired by pole construction I’ve seen [27, 28]. I have no 3D-printer, so I sent it



**23. Styrene monopole top cover.**

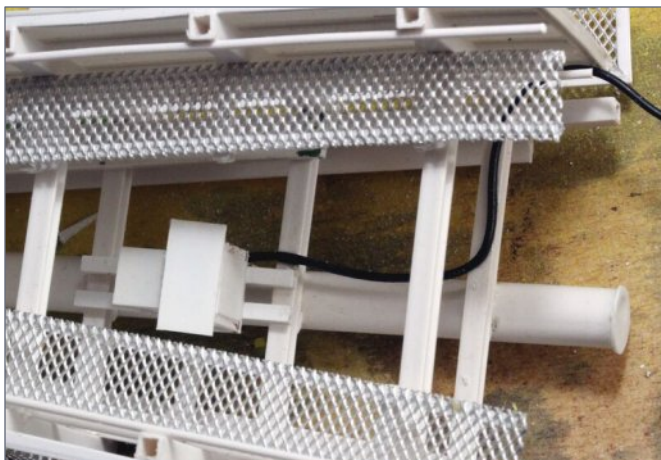


24. O scale brass ladder with 0.020" (24AWG) brass wire soldered to it as standoffs.



25. I drilled #75 holes into the half-inch tube and mounted the two pieces of ladder.





26. I added a fake electrical cabinet and fake wiring.



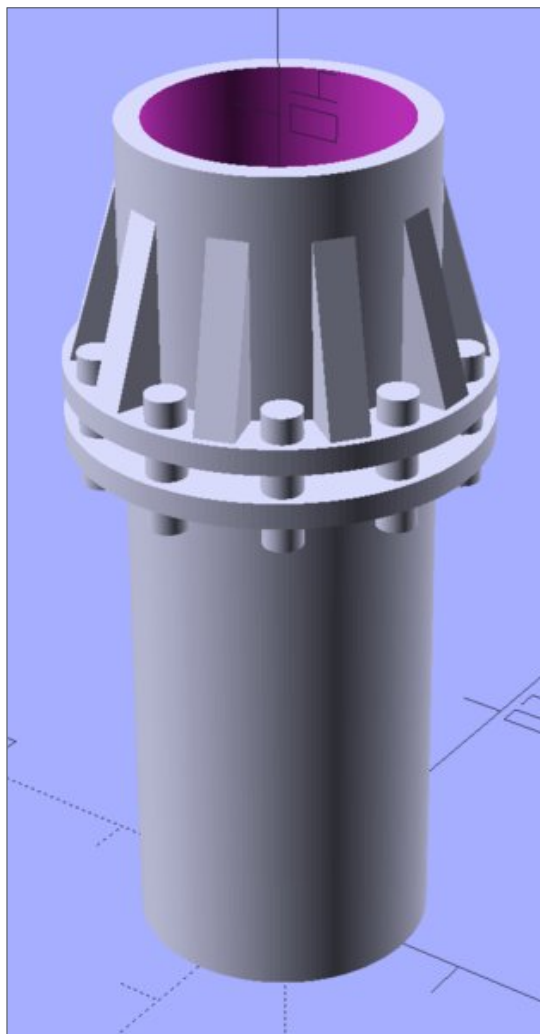
27. 3D-printed monopole base mount.



to Shapeways. Or you could scratchbuild it from styrene tube, sheet, and rod.

## ADDING THE LIGHTS

The final step before painting the billboard is adding the lights using SMD LEDs [29]. First, I made brackets for the lights using



28. The base mount shown in OpenSCAD.

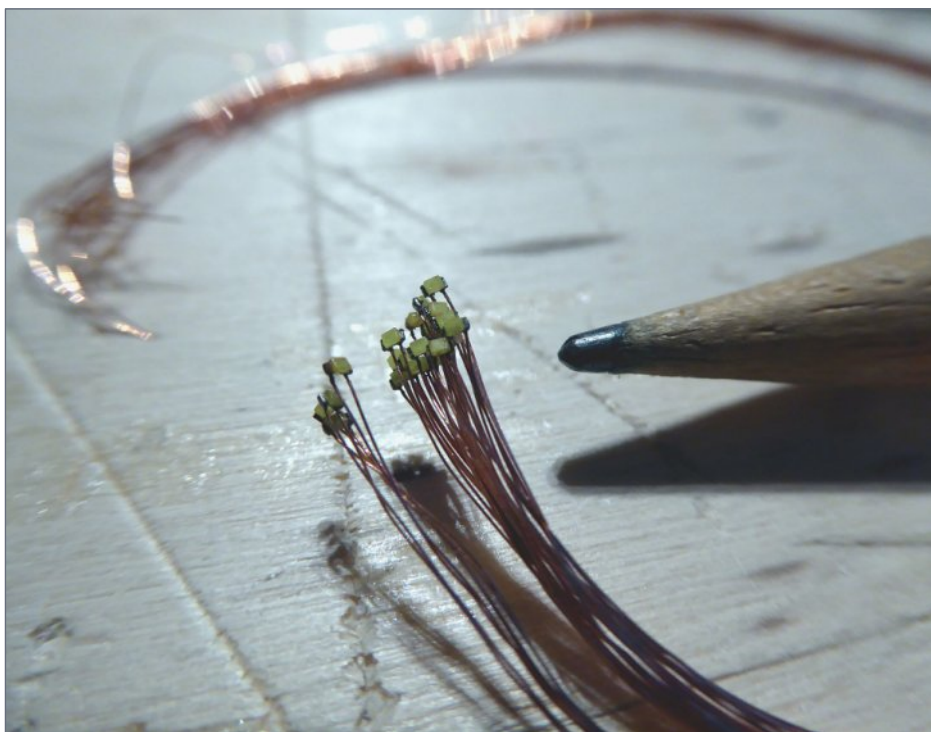


2mm styrene rod and 2' long pieces cut from 0.010" styrene C-channel to act as reflectors. I rounded the back corners of the C-channel reflectors with sandpaper.

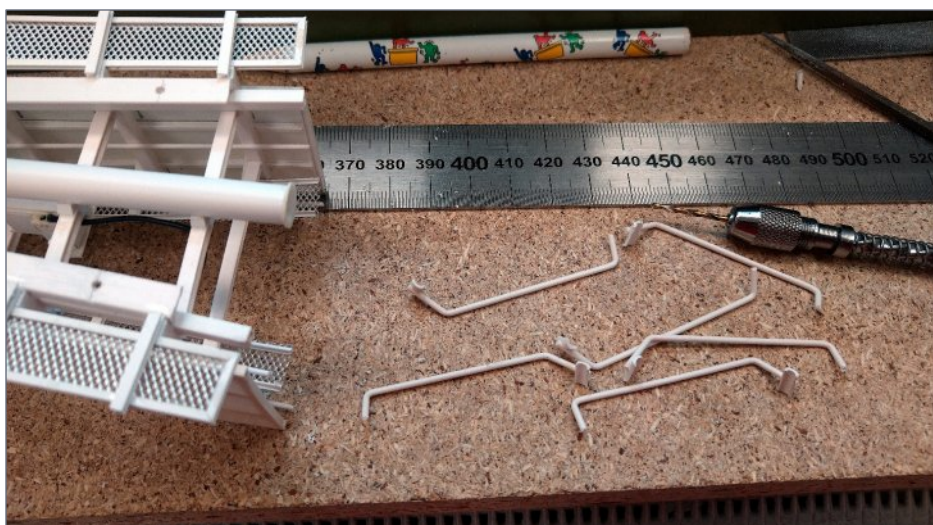
I cut the rod 15' long and made the main straight part 12' long, with the angled end holding the reflectors being about 2' long. Finally, I bent approximately the last foot of the rod at the other end up at a near right-angle for mounting into the billboard base.

I bent the rod over some drill bits to get the rounded angles. A heat gun or hair dryer can make the rod easier to bend, just be careful you don't get it too hot!

I drilled #46 holes in the mounting base of the billboards, and glued them in place.



29. Size 0603 SMD white LEDs used to light my billboard.



30. Lighting mounting brackets made from 2mm styrene rod and 0.100" styrene channel. I drilled #46 holes for the brackets on the main billboard assembly.



31. Light mounting brackets glued in place.



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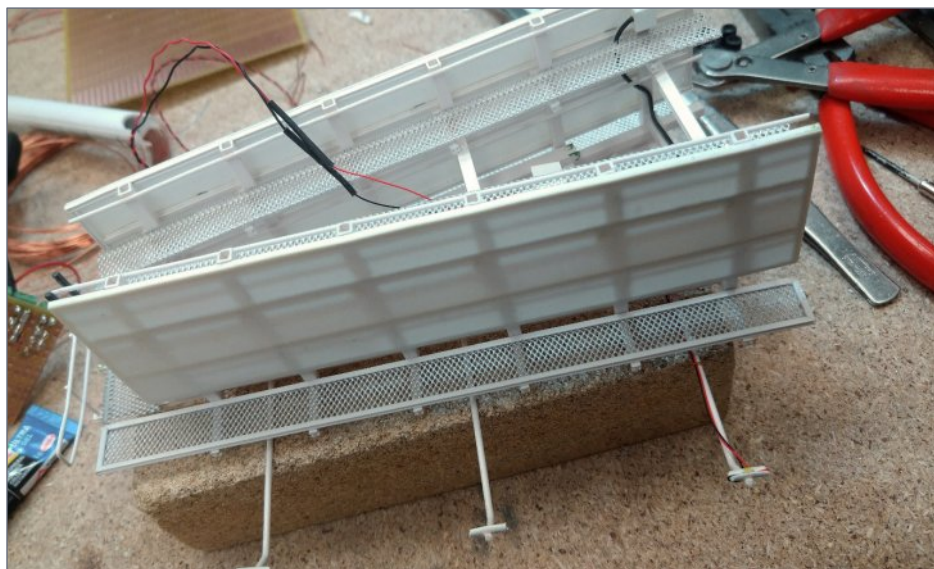
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I glued the 0603 SMD-LEDs to the reflectors with CA, and ran the wires down the supports and into the central monopole [32]. I tied-off the wires to hold them neatly around the 2mm rod using scrap wire without insulation. Later, I will connect them up to a 3V power source. Paint will help make the wires less obvious.

With all the LEDs in place, I masked them. On to the painting [33]. I used Vallejo Game Air Red Surface Primer, slightly diluted [34]. It went on very evenly. I allowed it to dry for 24 hours.

After the primer was completely dry, I weathered the billboard assembly with a white wash, followed by a black wash. Next, I removed the masking tape from the LEDs and painted the reflectors silver around the LEDs.

For my chosen Chick-Fil-A ad, I found original pictures online. I used GIMP to adjust the brightness, contrast, perspective, and



**32. I installed the SMD LEDs by gluing them into the reflectors, and ran the wires down the light supports. Here, the first one is installed. Paint will hide the wires.**



33. LEDs installed and ready for painting.



34. Completely painted with Vallejo Red Surface Primer.



size until I was satisfied. I printed the result on some heavy paper, then cut it out and fixed it in place with some Aleene's Tack-It removable glue.

Finally, I added the cow with some rods in its legs.

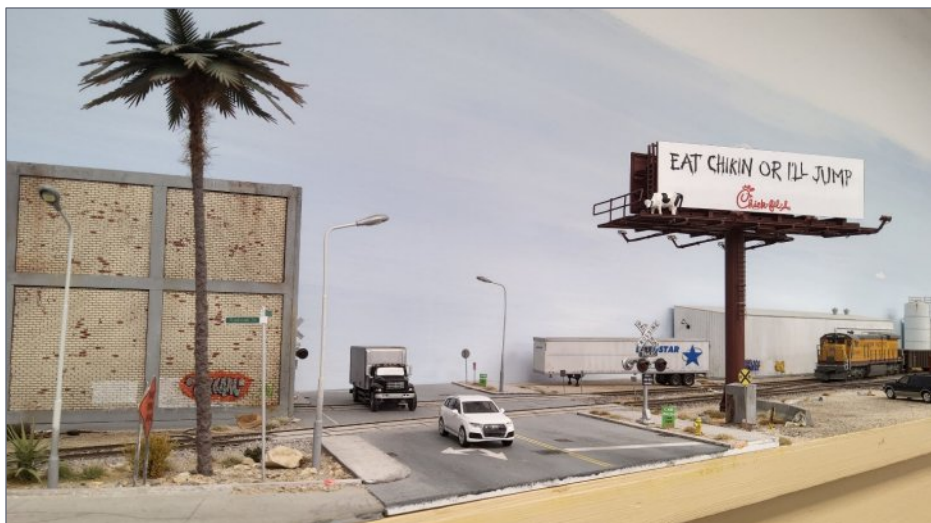
Well, that's it! The billboard is finished and mounted on the layout, and is well-lit for night time operations [35 -37]. I hope you have found this construction article interesting. ☑

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35. The finished billboard installed on the layout.



36. Another view of the finished billboard.



37. The lit street with the lighted billboard in the distance.



## ANDREAS RITTERSHOFER



At 5 years old, Andreas received his first model railroad as a Christmas present from his parents. His real start in the hobby came when he joined a FREMO group over 20 years ago, building modules and going to meets.

Since then, Andreas has built modules and attended FREMO-meets, enjoying prototypical operations. His FREMO group is modeling small local private German railroads in the sixties with great fidelity – and Andreas is documenting it here: [kleinbahnwiki.de](http://kleinbahnwiki.de).

At these FREMO meetings, Andreas discovered other groups modeling US railroads and became very attracted to it. He started modeling US railroads, first in N, then in HO – also as modules usable in FREMO-meets. Andreas is documenting his module work here: [somewhere-southwest.de](http://somewhere-southwest.de).

Recently, Andreas has acquired a dedicated train room, and will be extending his HO US railroad a lot, with plans to build a two-level switching layout.

Currently, he is building new modules for this growing HO switching layout. He's laying track as well as scratchbuilding all the structures, weathering cars, and so on.

Andreas is married with two adult daughters. He has been a high school teacher and an IT system administrator. His other hobby besides model railroading is skydiving. He has visited the US quite often for skydiving, and participated in setting a record for the largest German formation, 214 people in one group, done in Eloy, Arizona. See a video of this record-setting event here in English: [model-railroad-hobbyist.com/magazine/url/skydiving-record](http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/magazine/url/skydiving-record). ■

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**WATCH  
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## Easily make more realistic bushes

In this amazing 4-minute video by YouTuber **Spoorinmodel.nl** learn how to quite easily make some amazing model bushes. He shows the techniques step-by-step and the results are nothing short of incredible, as you can see in the thumbnail above.

Although he doesn't explicitly explain, he's mixing in some [\*flake leaf foliage\*](#) (even available in HO) to get a hyper-realistic sense of real leaves, not just amorphous blobs of foam. ☑



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# MARCH NEWS

column



Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2023

**RICHARD BALE AND JEFF SHULTZ**

REPORT THE LATEST HOBBY  
INDUSTRY NEWS ...



## INDUSTRY NEWS

### **Dave Clune (1938-2024)**

Noted narrow gauge modeler David Alan Clune passed away February 25, 2024. A retired Southern Pacific engineer, Clune was widely known for the extensive On3 Cascade County layout he built over a period of several decades in his home in Eugene, OR. David was a life member of the NMRA and MMR#711. He is the father of tool and die maker Chris Clune, co-founder of ExactRail Scale Models.

**American Model Builders** has closed. Family members have kept the business active since the death of founder John Hitzeman in the summer of 2022. Based in St. Louis, MO, AMB was a significant pioneer in developing laser-cut structure and car kits. In addition to its own line of LaserKits, AMB produced private label laser-cut products for several other kit suppliers. AMB was also a supplier of laser-cut models to the architectural trade.

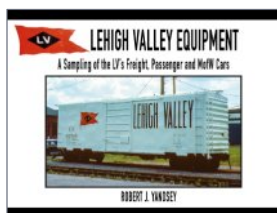
**Bethlehem Car Works** has been acquired by White Rose Hobbies, a full-line hobby dealer located in York, PA. The

THE LATEST MODEL RAILROAD PRODUCTS, NEWS & EVENTS

acquisition includes Bethlehem's extensive line of HO scale heavyweight Pullman passenger car kits, the Sparrow's Point line of HO scale rolling stock kits and the Kit Bits line of trucks and detail parts. Bethlehem Car Works was established by the late John R. Green who passed away last year.

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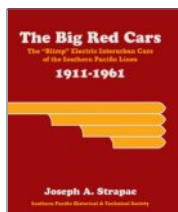
## NEW PRODUCTS FOR ALL SCALES



**Morning Sun Books** has released *Lehigh Valley Equipment* by Robert J. Yanosey. This 96 page all color review presents an interesting sampling of LV's passenger equipment, freight rolling stock and maintenance of way cars.

Info: [www.morningsunbooks.com](http://www.morningsunbooks.com)

---



In *The Big Red Cars*, author Joseph A. Strapac documents the story of the Blimp electric interurban cars Pacific Electric inherited from SP's bay area commuter service in 1941. Big, spartan, sturdy and cold, the Blimps arrived just in time to handle Southern California's flood of wartime

shipyard workers. With 335 pages and over 500 pictures, maps and drawings, this hardcover 335-page book is the first comprehensive study of the unique cars in decades. Published by the **Southern Pacific Historical & Technical Society**.

Info: [www.sphts.org](http://www.sphts.org)

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## ELECTRONICS

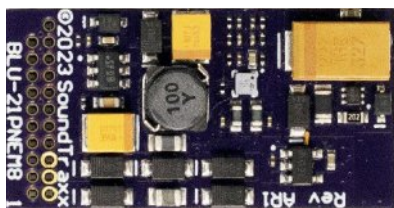
**SoundTraxx** has announced a new decoder in the Blunami line, the BLU-21PNEM8. Designed for use with 21-pin NEM connector equipped locomotives, they are expected to be in production by early April 2024. The BLU21-PNEM8 will be



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available with seven different sound sets: Steam-2, EMD, EMD-2, GE, ALCO, Baldwin & Others, and Electric. The BLU21-PNEM8 has eight function outputs and can be controlled either by the Blunami

Bluetooth app on iOS or Android, or via DCC through the rails.

Info: [www.soundtraxx.com](http://www.soundtraxx.com)

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## HO SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



New HO scale car kits from **Accurail** include this Southern Pacific /Texas & New Orleans 70-ton triple bay open hopper.

The model represents a prototype built with offset sides in 11-53. Kits are available singly and in 3-car sets with different road numbers.



HO scale kits for this Great Northern twin-bay covered hopper are also available singly and in a 3-car set.



Accurail's latest release of HO scale kits includes this 36' Fowler single-sheathed wood boxcar decorated for North Carolina-based Piedmont &

Northern Railway. The model reflects a prototype built in 10-14.



Accurail's kit for this 40' FGE wood reefer is available singly and in a 3-pack with different road numbers. The model

comes with Bettendorf-type plain bearing trucks.

Accurail's version of the 50' New York Susquehanna & Western welded steel boxcar comes with six-panel Superior sliding doors



Accurail HO scale car kits in this report come with appropriate trucks with Delrin wheelsets and Accurail knuckle couplers.

Info: [www.accurail.com](http://www.accurail.com)

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**Athearn's** July 2025 production schedule includes an EMD GP7U decorated as an ex-Santa Fe unit without any specific road identification. The HO scale Genesis model will come with a decal sheet with various road numbers for customizing the model for freelance hobbyists.



Details include a cab mounted air conditioning unit, a large Sinclair antenna and a Nathan K3LA horn. The headlight in this unit is mounted in the nose while all other GP7Us in this release have cab mounted headlights.



To accommodate a larger fuel tank, Athearn's GP7U rebuilds decorated for the Central Kansas Railway have their air tanks mounted on the roof.



Florida Central GP7Us switching industries in and around Orlando are equipped with a large Sinclair antenna

and a Nathan P5 air horn. They can also be identified by a blanked out dynamic brake panel.



Athearn has included two Santa Fe Southern Railway GP7U road numbers in this



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release: 07 and 0927. Details include a small fire cracker antenna and a Leslie RS-5T-RRO air horn. The tourist oriented short line operated between Santa Fe and Lamy, New Mexico.

**Note:** *At one time actor Michael Gross, an active model railroader, was part owner of SFSR. In 2012 the Santa Fe Southern Railway was featured in an episode of TV series Breaking Bad in which SFSR's GP7U No. 07 was delayed in order to facilitate the theft of 1,000 gallons of the industrial chemical methylamine from a tank car.*

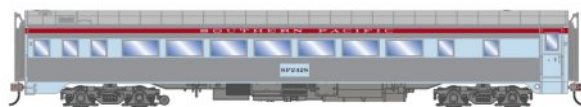


Athearn's version of GP7U diesels decorated for Idaho Northern & Pacific are distinguished by a large fire

cracker antenna and just two exhaust stacks – all other GP7Us in the July 2025 release have four stacks.

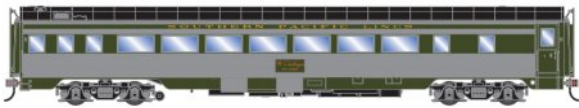
Details on all Athearn Genesis series GP7U models include uncoupling bars, trainline and MU hoses, MU stands, textured walkway tread, windshield wipers, lift rings, wire grab irons, sander lines, see-through cab windows and full cab interior, Celcon handrails, etched metal radiator intake and fan grilles, LED lighting, Genesis all-wheel precision driveline, Blomberg-B trucks and detailed fuel tank with fillers, gauges and breather pipes.

Athearn will offer GP7U DC models with DCC-ready features including a 21-pin NEM connector. DCC sound equipped GP7U locomotives will have SoundTraxx Tsunami2 sound and dual cube speakers.



Athearn's July 2025 production schedule includes Southern Pacific 77'

class 77-C-1 and 77-C3 chair cars. The HO scale Genesis model will be available in five liveries including the SP general service scheme shown above.



Additional paint schemes include SP Challenger (above) SP Golden State, SP

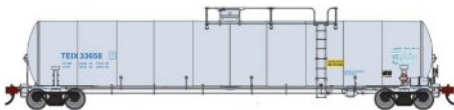
Cascade and a fantasy scheme lettered for Athearn. Features on all versions include constant LED interior lighting, operating diaphragms, and wing-type pedestal trucks with plain or roller bearings per the prototype being modeled. Skirting will also reflect prototype practice. A minimum track radius of 24" is recommended.



A Genesis model of an ACF 4600 cu. ft. covered hopper is listed on Athearn's July 2025 production schedule.

Variations in brake wheel location, round or trough hatches and the type of stiffener posts will be based on early, mid and post-1971 prototype production. Additional features include a photo-etched metal roof walk, wire grab irons, separate brake parts and 100-ton roller bearing trucks with 36" machined metal wheels and rotating axle caps.

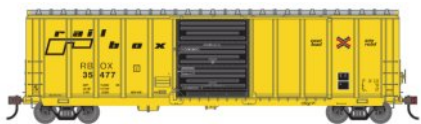
In addition to The Rock, Athearn's 4600 covered hopper in this release will be available for Western Pacific, Burlington Northern, St. Marys Railway West, First Union Rail and undecorated.



A Genesis UTC 33,000 gallon LPG tank car in three different body phases is coming from

Athearn in 2025. Road names will be Exxon Mobil, Transportation Equipment Inc., PLMX, North America Tank Line, Rocky Mountain Transportation and Capital Finance. Special features include photo-etched components and wire grab irons and handrails, McHenry double-shelf knuckle couplers, and 100-ton trucks with machined metal wheels.





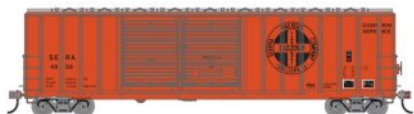
This 50' Pullman Standard exterior post boxcar with non-terminating ends and 10' sliding PS doors is included in Athearn's

July 2025 production schedule. The HO scale model represents Pullman Standard cars built in the 1970s. Road names in this release will be Railbox, Chicago & North Western, Southern Railway, St. Marys Railroad, Frisco, and St. Johnsbury & Lamoille County.



Athearn plans to release two FMC boxcars in July 2025. A 60' 100-ton version will have smooth sides and pair of four-panel

sliding doors on each side. Road names will be Cotton Belt, Norfolk Southern, CSX, Ventura County Railway (ex-GVSR), and Transportación Ferroviaria Mexicana.



The 50' FMC boxcar will have two 8' Youngstown sliding doors offset to the left. Road names will

be Sierra Railroad, McCloud Railway (Orange, ex-COP), and McCloud Railway (Green, ex-CPLT). Both the 50' and 60' FMC boxcars will be detailed with separately applied grab irons, end ladders and brake wheels, and photo etched cross-over platforms.



Athearn has included two steel mill gondolas in its July 2025

production schedule: a 14-panel 52' version with straight sides, and a 65' version with fishbelly sides. Both of the HO scale ready-to-run models feature an injection molded body with interior detail, wire grab irons and positionable drop ends.



The 52' gondola will be available decorated for

Denver & Rio Grande Western, Burlington Northern, Grand Trunk Western, Nacionales de Mexico, Delaware & Hudson, and

Canadian Pacific. Road names for the 65' gondola include Southern Railway, Southern Pacific, Cotton Belt, Denver & Rio Grande Western, Lehigh Valley, and CSX.

Info: [www.athearn.com](http://www.athearn.com)

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**Bachmann** has released an HO scale 50' 6" outside braced boxcar that features a factory installed FRED unit (Flashing Rear End Device) that operates on DC and DCC layouts.



Additional features include positionable doors, Celcon plastic 100-ton trucks with blackened machined metal wheels, and E-Z Mate knuckle couplers.



Road names include Greenville & Northern, Conrail, Frisco, Norfolk Southern, Burlington Northern, Canadian National, CSX, Valdosta Southern, Berlin Mills Railway,

Montana Rail Link, and Bath & Hammondsport

Info: [www.bachmanntrains.com](http://www.bachmanntrains.com)

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R. Bale

## ALCO C-415 DIESEL LOCOMOTIVE

The C-415 diesel-electric locomotive was a large switch engine (or small road engine) built by the American Locomotive Company (Alco) between 1966 and 1968. It was part of Alco's Century Series locomotives. Alco marketed the C-415 as a universal unit capable of handling Mainline, branchline, heavy transfer and yard switching duties. The C-415 was offered with several options, the most obvious being a center cab available in three heights: A tall cab (16' 4" over rail head) for best visibility for switching, a low cab (14' 6") for industrial customers with restricted clearances, and a mid-height (15' 2") for general use. Additional options included AAR Type B trucks or Alco high-adhesion trucks. The center cab arrangement separated Alco's somewhat unreliable 251-F prime mover from the generator and radiator which required more wiring and piping, a longer driveshaft, and increased maintenance. The C-415 was a failure with only 26 being sold. By comparison, EMD's SW1500, also introduced in 1966, sold more than 800 units.



Photo courtesy Cody White

**Bowser** is booking reservations for an HO scale model of an Alco C-415 center cab locomotive. A release date is expected to be announced soon. HO scale versions of C-415 locomotives with regular height cabs will be available decorated for Burlington Northern, Spokane Portland & Seattle (two paint schemes), Rock Island (three schemes),) Alco Century Demo, and Hamersley Railway (Australia).



Photo courtesy of Joe Blackwell

C-415s with extended height cabs will be available for Southern Pacific, Burlington Junction (two paint schemes), Chehalis Western Railroad (Weyerhaeuser subsidiary) and Columbia & Cowlitz Railway.



Features include individual air hoses, windshield wipers, grab irons, and uncoupling bars; window glass, operating headlights, a can motor, knuckle couplers, and road-specific fuel tanks. Bowser's C-415s will come with either AAR Type B or Alco Hi-Ad trucks depending on the practice of the prototype road name being modeled. DC versions of the model will have a 21-pin plug for an aftermarket decoder. DCC sound versions will come with a LokSound V5 decoder.



Undecorated models (no sound) will come with a bag of parts including both types of truck side frames, fuel tanks, handrails, and other small parts. A sound kit for C-415s will be available as a separate purchase.

Info: [bowser-trains.com](http://bowser-trains.com)

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R. Bale

## SANTA FE 4-6-4 BLUE GOOSE

The Santa Fe Railway's 3460 class steam locomotive consisted of six 4-6-4 Hudson type steam locomotives built in 1937 by the Baldwin Locomotive Works. The locomotives were intended for service between La

Junta, CO and Chicago IL, a relatively flat division of ATSF's mainline well suited for the 4-6-4 type. The oil-fired 3460s had high-stepping 84" drivers with SKF roller bearings on every axle. The 47' tenders had a capacity of 20,000 gallons of water and 7,000 gallons of fuel oil. The first locomotive in the class, No. 3460, was streamlined with skirting below the running boards and a skyline casing along the top of the boiler that encased the stack and domes. It was given a distinctive light blue and silver paint scheme that earned it the nickname Blue Goose. No. 3460 was Santa Fe's only streamlined steam locomotive and became the focus of considerable ATSF publicity.



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**Broadway Limited** has released an HO scale model of Santa Fe's No. 3460 Blue Goose steam locomotive.

Several versions of the Blue Goose decorating scheme are available including the as delivered version complete with skyline casing, skirting and blue running gear with white driver tires (above).



A 1939-1941 version of No. 3460 has the skirts removed

and the running gear, including the tender trucks, painted black. The model is equipped with a Santa Fe-type telescoping extension that elongated the stack to clear smoke better. It could be lowered to pass under low bridges and tunnels. Broadway Limited's 1951-1953 version of the Blue Goose has the skirting removed with the running gear, including the tender trucks, painted blue. It also has a telescoping stack.



The Blue Goose models are composed of hand-crafted brass boilers, cabs and tender bodies combined with die cast locomotive and tender chassis.

Lighting includes separately controllable headlight, number board lights, cab light, tender deck light, and rear emergency light. Additional

features include a 5-pole skew wound can motor, engineer and fireman figures, and a traction tire on one driver. The model is available in BLI's no-sound Stealth series or with Paragon4 Sound/DC/DCC sound system with synchronized puffing smoke and integral GoPack capacitors.

Info: [www.broadway-limited.com](http://www.broadway-limited.com)



**ClassOneModelWorks.com** is now offering the GSC Commonwealth A 3-axle RB truck used on their depressed

center flatcars separately. The trucks include rotating bearing caps and metal wheels.

Info: [classonemodelworks.com](http://classonemodelworks.com)

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The Paducah GP10 locomotives from **InterMountain** are now scheduled for production.

Advanced reservations are being

taken through March 31, 2024. In addition to ten schemes announced earlier, four new schemes have been added to this run. For Illinois Central an orange & white scheme will feature an inset headlight, while the "Operation Lifesaver" model will have frog-eye headlights. Paint schemes for GATX Locomotive Group and SP Construction Services have also been included. Four road numbers will be available for each of the four new paint schemes.



Also open for advance reservations through March 31st are post-1970 AAR 10' 6" boxcar models featuring shortened ladders and removed

roofwalks. Road names in the release are Canadian Pacific, Canadian National, Illinois Central, Missouri Pacific, Norfolk & Western, Norfolk Southern – MOW, Reading XMc, Rock Island, and Western Pacific.



The cars will feature 4-3-1 Improved Dreadnaught ends, metal wheels, and knuckle couplers.

Info: [intermountain-railway.com](http://intermountain-railway.com)

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**Kadee's** newest offering is an HO scale PS-1 50' boxcar decorated for Missouri Pacific. The model accurately represents a prototype built in 1961 with Pullman Standard 9' sliding doors, full-height ladders and a metal running board.



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The ready-to-run model comes with Kadee couplers and Kadee HGC self-centering trucks with metal wheels.

Info: [www.kadee.com](http://www.kadee.com)

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R. Bale

## CANADIAN AAR BOXCARS WITH NSC3 ENDS

In a three year period during the mid-1950s, National Steel Car (NSC) of Hamilton, Ontario, and Eastern Car Company (ECC) in Trenton Nova Scotia, built 4250 40' boxcars for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) and Canadian National Railway (CNR). The cars were built to AAR standards with 10' 6" interior height, 6' sliding doors and unique NSC steel ends identified as NSC3 ends. The 6' Youngstown doors used by the Canadian builders differed from American-built versions in the way the three corrugated steel panels were joined. The Canadian style door had rivets in the valley of the corrugations as opposed to the American practice of riveting the panels together in the raised area of the corrugations. CP received 1350 cars from NSC while CNR took delivery of 2900 cars split between NSC and ECC.

The CP cars were delivered with Canadian Pacific Railway stenciled in the road's three-step block letter design. In later years many of the cars were repainted in the Script or Multimark designs. The CN cars were delivered with the green maple leaf. Cars built in March and April of 1954 received the earlier version with the "Serves All Canada" box tilted over the maple leaf. The remainder of the cars were painted with the updated horizontal "Serves All Canada" box over the maple leaf. In later years they would be repainted in the Noodle lettering scheme.

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**National Scale Car** has reissued its HO scale resin mini kits for converting an InterMountain 40' boxcar into an accurate model of a Canadian AAR boxcar with NSC3

steel ends. The kits includes resin NSC3 ends, Canadian-style Youngstown doors, Des Plaines Hobbies Canadian-style ladders and sill steps, tack boards, slack adjuster and Black Cat decals. The modeler must supply an InterMountain 40' boxcar with a 10' 6" interior height.



CNR kits are available with a choice of green leaf or noodle decals. CP kits are available with three-step Gothic or script decals. Assembly instructions can be previewed at:

[nationalscalecar.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Kit-Instructions-MK101-CP-AAR-CAR-WITH-NSC3-END.pdf](http://nationalscalecar.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Kit-Instructions-MK101-CP-AAR-CAR-WITH-NSC3-END.pdf).

Info: [nationalscalecar.com](http://nationalscalecar.com)

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**Q Connection** is selling a special run of AAR 70 ton triple-bay open hopper cars. The models are based on class HT-10 prototypes built at CB&Q's Havelock shops in the late

1940s. The HO scale models are being produced for Q Connection by Broadway Limited.



Three schemes are available including CB&Q cars 1-49 with plain bearing trucks in mineral red paint, orange CB&Q cars built in 2-49 with roller bearing assemblies

mounted in plain bearing journal boxes, and Colorado & Southern HT-10C Chinese Red hoppers built in 8-61 with Timken roller bearing trucks.

Info: [www.qconnection.biz](http://www.qconnection.biz)

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**State Tool & Die Company** is booking pre-orders for an HO scale Treadwell 200 ton hot metal car. In addition to the main body and end platform assemblies, the 3D printed resin

kit includes a pour spout cover, four-wheel and six-wheel trucks with 36" metal wheelsets, Kadee #158 couplers and assembly instructions. A release date for the kit is pending.

Info: [www.statetoolanddie.com](http://www.statetoolanddie.com)

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**Tangent Scale Models** has completed the fourth release of its HO scale Pullman-Standard PS-2CD 4427 cu. ft. high-side covered

hopper. PS introduced the 4427 with high sides and 13 exterior side posts in 1966. Production ended in 1971 after delivery of approximately 12,000 cars.

Tangent's latest release includes seven new paint schemes and two undecorated options. Road names include a gray Canadian Pacific car with Youngstown EZ-Roll gravity gates, Apex end crossover platforms, distinctive 2-step stirrups and jacking pads above the trucks.



Models decorated for Pillsbury, TLDX Lease, and Milwaukee Road share several road specific details including Miner gravity outlet gates,

square stirrups and Timken rotating bearing cars on 100-ton Barber S-2 trucks.



A 1980s-era Milwaukee Road car patched for WCL Railcars Inc. has replacement roof hatches and Morton crossover platforms on each end of the car.



is the only 4427 in this release without center sill supports between the bays.



Completing this release of 4427 covered hoppers is a green Burlington Northern car in a simplified 1988 BN repaint. Details

include Morton end cross over platforms, center sill supports, square stirrup steps, and Timken roller bearing caps.

All of Tangent's high-side PS4427s in this release feature full end cage and underbody rigging, uncoupling bars, Kadее couplers, and 100-ton Barber S-2 trucks with machined metal wheelsets. Two undecorated models are also available in this release.

Info: [www.tangentscalemodels.com](http://www.tangentscalemodels.com)

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## N SCALE PRODUCT NEWS

**Athearn Cancellation Notice:** The scheduled production of Athearn N scale 48' containers announced in July 2023, with a planned delivery date of November 2024, has been cancelled. Athearn did not receive sufficient preorders to meet minimum quantities for producing the product. In making the announcement, Athearn apologized for any inconvenience caused to those few customers who did preorder.

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**Athearn's** production schedule for July 2025 includes four new N scale models. The list begins with an ACF 4600 cu. ft. covered hopper with a

photo-etched metal roof walk, wire grab irons, separate brake



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detail and 100-ton roller bearing trucks. In addition to The Rock, road names available on this release will be Western Pacific, Burlington Northern, St. Marys Railway West, First Union Rail, and undecorated.



A UTC 33,000 gallon LPG tank car is included in the July 2025 schedule.

Road names will be Exxon Mobil, Transportation Equipment Inc., PLMX, North America Tank Line, Rocky Mountain Transportation, and Capital Finance.



Athearn has included two N scale steel mill gondolas in its July 2025 production schedule: a 14-panel 52' version with straight sides, and a 65' version with fishbelly sides. Both of the ready-to-run models feature an injection molded body with improved detail.



The 52' gondola will be available decorated for Denver & Rio Grande

Western, Burlington Northern, Grand Trunk Western, Nacionales de Mexico, Delaware & Hudson, and Canadian Pacific. Road names for the 65' mill gondola will be Southern Railway, Southern Pacific, Cotton Belt, Denver & Rio Grande Western, Lehigh Valley, and CSX.

Info: [www.athearn.com](http://www.athearn.com)

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**Jacksonville Terminal Company** has a variety of N

scale Pullman Standard 60' flatcars scheduled for release over the next few months. The models feature a die cast metal underframe, 70-ton trucks with metal wheels, body mounted couplers, and extra pedestals to accommodate a variety of loads.



The models will be available in several paint schemes that range from as-delivered (left) to extensively weathered.





PS 60' flatcar patched for TTX and weathered for 5, 8 and 12 years.

Also new from Jackson Terminal are 3-packs of 20' standard height containers decorated for China Shipping and Matson.

Info: [www.jtcmodeltrains.com](http://www.jtcmodeltrains.com)

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**Lowell Smith/Railsmith** is taking preorders for a limited release N scale Alco S-2 decorated for the Portland

Terminal Railroad/Northern Pacific Terminal Company in Portland, OR. Produced by Atlas, the limited run covers #32, #33, and #37 in analog DC, and #37, #40, and #41 equipped with ESU LokSound DCC/Sound. Currently the sound equipped locomotives are sold out.

Info: [lowellsmith.net](http://lowellsmith.net)

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Newly released N scale models from **Micro-Trains Line** include a Pullman Standard PS-1 40' boxcar decorated in Seaboard Air Line's silver paint scheme. The model comes with Bettendorf-type plain bearing trucks.



North American Despatch-NADX leased this wood sheathed ice reefer to the Kansas Egg & Poultry Company of Hillsboro, Kansas.

Micro-Trains N scale version comes with Bettendorf-type plain bearing trucks.



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been targeted with graffiti.



Micro-Trains N scale model of a 40' Penn Central class-X54 boxcar with Bettendorf-type plain bearing trucks is based on a prototype built in the early

1950s for the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Info: Contact a dealer.

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## STRUCTURES AND SCENIC SUPPLIES



**Berkshire Valley Models** has released new HO and O scale kits for a brick Hose House that includes a hand-drawn Hose Cart. The model is based on a period structure still standing in Idaho Springs, CO. For more modern layouts the

structure can serve as a museum. The assembled structure has a footprint of approximately 2.25" x 2.875" in HO, and 4" x 5" in O scale. The craftsman style kit consists of laser-cut basswood. Assembly and painting are required.

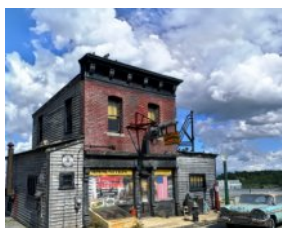


Kits for a horse-drawn Hook and Ladder Wagon are available as separate purchases.

Info: [berkshirevalleymodels.com](http://berkshirevalleymodels.com)

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The latest release from **Fos Scale Models** is a kit for Frank Lava Gunsmith. The HO scale structure is based on an old store-front business in New York City that was known for the oversize revolver hanging over the entrance. The kit include a one-piece 3D printed brick front and facade, scale lumber,



laser-cut details, plastic windows, sidewalk material, cast metal and 3D printed details, colorful signage, and assembly instructions. The finished model has a foot print of approximately 4.5" x 5". Figures, vehicles and scenery are not included. Painting and assembly are

required.

Info: [www.fosscalemodels.com](http://www.fosscalemodels.com)

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**Inter-Action Hobbies** has several new kits available. The Moonshiner's Shed, available in O, S, and HO scale, consists of engraved and cut shed walls, framing and shelving, roof,

and shingles. It also includes three bootlegger figures, and 3D-printed resin details such as the still, thumper drum, and condenser barrel; a firewood pile, mash barrels, small barrels, mixing tub, buckets, funnels, bottles, jugs, quart sealers and trays. The O scale model measures 3.6" wide X 4.7" long X 2.5" tall, the S scale model measures 2.7" wide X 3.5" long X 1.9" tall, and the HO scale model measures 2.0" wide X 2.6" long X 1.4" tall.



Also new is an HO scale Step Van kit, typical of those seen making deliveries across North America. Interior details include a driver's seat, steering console, and engine cover. Included decals are

suitable for decorating the van for Giordano's Produce. The finished kit measures 1.1" wide X 3.1" long X 1.6" tall, including laser-cut resin impregnated board for the body, clear window glazing, basswood chassis, and wire for mirror frames.

Based off the step van model above is an HO scale Surveillance/SWAT van, which adds 3D-printed air conditioners, satellite dish, and signage for an FBI Mobile





R. Bale

## EMD's SD9 ROAD SWITCHER

The SD9 is a 1,750hp six-axle diesel locomotive built by GM's Electro-Motive Division. Between 1954 and 1959, 471 SD9s were built for North American railroads, with an additional 44 produced for export. The SD9 was the second model of EMD's SD (special duty) line of locomotives, following the SD7. Just as the SD7 was a lengthened GP7 with two additional axles, the SD9 was a lengthened four-axle GP-9. The additional axles in the SD series provided more tractive effort and better distribution of weight on the rails. The last phase of SD9 construction had a carbody similar to the SD18 which replaced it in the EMD catalog in 1960.



Command Center, a SWAT van, or a Flowers By Irene disguise. Painting and assembly are required.

Info: [www.interactionhobbies.com](http://www.interactionhobbies.com)



**Jackson Standard** is selling an exceptionally well-detailed modern relay shed. The HO scale model accurately replicates a 6' x 8' aluminum utility structure manufactured by Safetrans System Corporation. The prototype sheds are employed at highway grade crossings, trackside signals, and railroad diamonds.

Info: [www.jacksonstandard.com](http://www.jacksonstandard.com)



A limited run HO scale structure kit named Crown Transfer is now available from **Mine Mount Models**. The first kit in a planned six to seven kit series named the Echo Point Harbord Series, Crown Transfer consists of

several sub-kits, including the main wooden warehouse, a brick extension, a stucco annex, a bridge span, and Fynn's Boat Shop. Also included is a gantry crane, 12" of wood bulkhead, and pier decking. The kit features laser-cut structure walls and roof, Tichy doors, windows, and lights, rooftop billboard signs, shingles, corrugated roofing, rolled tarpaper, and over 65 Mine Mount Models 3D-printed resin details. The overall building size as seen in the photo above is 13"x14".

Info: [minemountmodels.com](http://minemountmodels.com)

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**Northwestern Scale Models** has available HO and N scale 3D-Printed models of General Railway Signal Company (GRS) signal instrument housings in assorted housings.

Info: [www.nwscalemodels.com](http://www.nwscalemodels.com)

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**Rapido Trains** is developing an authentic HO scale model of a General Motors New Look Suburban bus. Fondly known as *the Fishbowl*, GM's New Look Suburban was the face of

North American public and regional transit throughout the latter half of the 20th century.



The Suburban was intended primarily for express and intercity service and is readily identified by high-back seats and the lack of a rear door. Rapido's new HO scale model represents the second

through fourth generations of GM production which saw service from the mid-1960s to the 1980s. Rapido is currently booking orders for the new bus. Delivery is TBA.

A partial list of features for the new model include rubber tires, positionable front wheels, separate advertisement



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frames, pre-installed route destination signs, roof hatches and three types of bumpers (steel, water and rubber).



Decorating schemes scheduled for the initial release include Greyhound, GO Transit, Gray

Coach, Golden Gate, Metropolitan Provincial, NASA Tour, Public Service Transit, New York Bus Service, and SEMTA.



An unlettered model painted white and silver will also be available in this release.

Info: [www.rapido.trains.com](http://www.rapido.trains.com)



Two new road names for the Operator CIMC 53' container in HO and N scale have been announced by **Scale Trains**. AMZ – Amazon and WM – Walmart will be available in singles and 3-packs. N scale models are available now with the HO scale version available for pre-order, and are expected to arrive later in March 2024.

Info: [www.scaletrains.com](http://www.scaletrains.com)



**Woodland Scenics** is preparing to release this rustic cabin in N, HO and O scales. The model will be fully assembled, painted and weathered. The model features interior lighting ready for use with Woodland's JustPlug Lighting System.

Info: [woodlandscenics.com](http://woodlandscenics.com)

## NEW DECALS, SIGNS AND FINISHING PRODUCTS



**Great Decals** has white N scale water slide decals for Sid Richardson SRCX ACF Center Flow carbon

black cars. Each set includes the Sid Richardson herald, road number 345 through 354, dimensional and capacity data, and car specific lettering.

Info: [greatdecals.com/SG-101N.JPG](http://greatdecals.com/SG-101N.JPG)



Also from Great Decals are decals for Akron, Canton and Youngstown Railroad steam locomotives in HO scale.

Each set, which does one locomotive, includes the red and white AC&Y herald and the road name, numbers, and capacity data lettering in white.

Info: [greatdecals.com/SG-003H.JPG](http://greatdecals.com/SG-003H.JPG)

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## ! BRIEFLY NOTED AT PRESS TIME ...

**Broadway Limited** is preparing tooling for an HO scale Class D Four-truck Shay. Availability it planned for early 2025 ...

**Concept Models** has upgraded several of its HO scale freight car kits with the addition of 3D printed parts ...

**Morning Sun Books** will soon release Volume 8 of *Rio Grande in Color: Hauling Freight Over the Great Divide* ...

**Piko America** has released DCC/Sound versions of its new HO scale Krauss-Maffei ML4000 diesel hydraulic locomotive. More K-M units decorated for Southern Pacific will be available in a few weeks ...

**Walthers** has just released a new LED fascia controller. New HO scale Mainline models coming this spring include a Trinity 57' 4750 triple-bay covered hopper followed a month or two later by an ACF 50' Plate B boxcar with exterior posts ... ■

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including website, to [mrhmag.com/contact/  
News event - product announcement](http://mrhmag.com/contact/News%20event%20-%20product%20announcement)***

## Ongoing 2024

**ONLINE, Zoom**, dates vary, see website. Operation Special Interest Group Meetups – limited attendance available.

Info: [www.opsig.org/Virtual](http://www.opsig.org/Virtual)

Archive: [www.opsig.org/Virtual/Past](http://www.opsig.org/Virtual/Past)

**ONLINE, Zoom & YouTube**, Wednesday & Saturday, see Facebook page. “New Tracks” Meetup, hosted by Jim Kellow, MMR.

Info: [newtracksmodeling.com](http://newtracksmodeling.com)

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/channel/UCMAVhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMAVhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA)

**ONLINE, Facebook & YouTube**, dates vary, see Facebook page. “NMRax” organized by Gordy Robinson, Martyn Jenkins, Gert Muller, Jordan Kramer.

Info: [www.facebook.com/groups/nmragroup](http://www.facebook.com/groups/nmragroup)

**ONLINE, YouTube**, every other Saturday. 4th Division, Pacific Northwest Region, NMRA hosts online layout tours and clinics.

Archive: [www.youtube.com/c/4DPNRMovies](http://www.youtube.com/c/4DPNRMovies)

**ONLINE, Zoom, Second Tuesdays**, 8pm Eastern. “Off the Beaten Track” featuring Narrow Gauge layouts, clinics, and manufacturers.

Info: [groups.io/g/NNG](https://groups.io/g/NNG)

**AROUND THE USA, IN-PERSON**, Various dates. ScaleTrains.com Road Trip.

Info: [www.scaletrains.com/roadtrip](https://www.scaletrains.com/roadtrip)

## March – April 2024

**ONLINE, YouTube**, March 18-21, 2024. NERx, the annual Northeastern Region, NMRA Virtual Convention.

Info: [nerx.org/](https://nerx.org/) and <https://www.youtube.com/c/NMRAORGMModelRailroading>

**CANADA, ONTARIO, PRESCOTT**, April 13, 2024. Bytown and Prescott Model Railroaders Group Train Show. Leo Boivin Arena, #444 Prince Street.

Info: [ronlipsett@hotmail.com](mailto:ronlipsett@hotmail.com)

**CALIFORNIA, CROCKETT**, April 13-14, 2024. Carquinez Model Railroad Society Open House. 645 Loring Avenue.

Info: [cmrstrainclub.org](https://cmrstrainclub.org)

**CALIFORNIA, MILPITAS**, April 24-28, 2024. The Tech Line, PCR Convention 2024. Sonesta Hotel, 777 Bellew Drive.

Info: [www.pcrnmra.net/conv2024](https://www.pcrnmra.net/conv2024)

**COLORADO, DENVER**, April 6-7, 2024. Rocky Mountain Train Show – Spring 2024. National Western Complex, 4655 Humboldt St.

Info: [rockymountaintrainshow.com/Default.aspx](https://rockymountaintrainshow.com/Default.aspx)

**GEORGIA, CARTERSVILLE**, March 9-10, 2024. Piedmont Division Model Train Show. Clarence Brown Conference Center, 5450 GA Hwy 20.

Info: [themodeltrainshow.com](https://themodeltrainshow.com)

**GEORGIA, MACON**, March 22-23, 2024. Central Georgia RPM (fmly Savannah RPM). Howard Community Center, 5645 Forsyth Rd.

Info: [www.facebook.com/centralgarpmp](https://www.facebook.com/centralgarpmp)



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**ILLINOIS, MACHESNEY PARK**, March 16-17, 2024. Rock River Valley Train Show. Harlem High School, 9229 N. Alpine Rd.  
info: [www.rrvd-nmra.com](http://www.rrvd-nmra.com)

**ILLINOIS, WAUCONDA**, March 23-24, 2024. Lake County Model RR Club Open House. 107 S. Main St. Rear Entrance.  
Info: [lcmrr.org](http://lcmrr.org)

**INDIANA, INDIANOPOLIS**, April 26-28, 2024. New York Central System Historical Society 2024 Convention. Indianapolis Airport Crowne Plaza, 2501 S High School Rd.  
Info: [www.nycshs.net/NYCSHS-Convention-2024--Indianapolis-IN-April-26--28-2024 c 23.html](http://www.nycshs.net/NYCSHS-Convention-2024--Indianapolis-IN-April-26--28-2024_c_23.html)

**INDIANA, NAPPANEE**, March 16, 2024. 19th Annual Train Show by the Elkhart Model Railroad Club. Claywood Event Center, 13924 N 1100 W (County Line Road).  
Info: [www.emrrc.com](http://www.emrrc.com)

**KANSAS, HERINGTON**, April 27-28, 2024. Herington Kansas Railroad Days Model Railroading and Railroad Memorabilia Show. Herington Community Building, 810 S. Broadway.  
Info: [heringtonhistory.org/heringtonrailroaddays](http://heringtonhistory.org/heringtonrailroaddays)

**NORTH CAROLINA, HICKORY**, April 5-6, 2024. 22nd Annual NC Railroad Expo. Hickory Metro Convention Center, 1360 13th Ave Dr SE.  
Info: [hickorytrainshow@gmail.com](mailto:hickorytrainshow@gmail.com)

**OKLAHOMA, TULSA**, March 22-24, 2024. Indian Nations 2024 Layout Design and Operations Weekend. Akdar Shrine Center, 2808 S Sheridan Road.  
Info: [ldopsigmeet.tulsanmra.org](http://ldopsigmeet.tulsanmra.org)

**OREGON, ELSIE**, April 6, 2024. Pacific Model Loggers Congress, Camp 18 Restaurant and Logging Museum, 42362 Highway 26.  
Info: [pacificmodelloggerscongress.org](http://pacificmodelloggerscongress.org)

**PENNSYLVANIA, MALVERN**, March 22-24, 2024. Railroad Prototype Modelers – Valley Forge. Desmond Hotel Malvern, a DoubleTree by Hilton, One Liberty Blvd.  
Info: [www.rpmvalleyforge.com](http://www.rpmvalleyforge.com)

## Future 2024 by location

**CANADA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, SURREY**, May 22-26, 2024. Surrey Excursion, NMRA PNR 2024 Convention. Sheraton Vancouver, Guildford Hotel, 15269 104th Avenue.  
Info: [www.pnr2024.7divpnr.ca](http://www.pnr2024.7divpnr.ca)

**NEW ZEALAND, ASHBURTON**, July 6-7, 2024. Ashburton Model Train Show. Tinwald Memorial Hall, Graham Street, Tinwald.  
Info: [ashburtontrainshow.co.nz](http://ashburtontrainshow.co.nz)

**NEW ZEALAND, MOSGIEL**, May 4-5, 2024. Dunedin Model Train Show. 12 Wickliffe Street.  
Info: [www.facebook.com/groups/159812677415713](https://www.facebook.com/groups/159812677415713)

**ALABAMA, DECATUR**, June 20-23, 2024. River Rails 2024, SER Convention. Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Decatur Riverfront, 1101 6th Ave NE.  
Info: [midsouthnmra.org/Convention.html](http://midsouthnmra.org/Convention.html)

**ARIZONA, GLENDALE**, May 11, 2024. Arizona Railroad Historical Society Swap Meet. Glendale Christian Church, 9661 N 59th Ave.  
Info: Craig Ferris 623-340-3529

**ARIZONA, MESA**, May 2-4, 2024. 2024 Sn3 Symposium. Sheraton Mesa Hotel at Wrigleyville West, 860 North Riverview.  
Info: [sn3symposium.com](http://sn3symposium.com)

**CALIFORNIA, CROCKETT**, June 22-23, August 24-25, September 14, October 26-27, December 7-8, 2024. Carquinez Model Railroad Society Open House. 645 Loring Avenue.  
Info: [cmrstrainclub.org](http://cmrstrainclub.org)



**CALIFORNIA, LONG BEACH**, August 4-11, 2024. Surfliner 2024 NMRA National Convention. Westin Long Beach, 333 East Ocean Blvd.

Info: [surfliner2024.org](https://surfliner2024.org)

**ILLINOIS, COLLINSVILLE**, July 19-20, 2024. St. Louis RPM. The Gateway Center, 1 Gateway Center Drive.

Info: [stlrpm.com](https://stlrpm.com)

**ILLINOIS, NAPERVILLE**, October 10-12, 2024. RPM Chicagoland 2024.

Info: [www.rpmconference.com](https://www.rpmconference.com)

**INDIANA, SOUTH BEND**, May 2-4, 2024. Around The Bend, Midwest Regional Convention. The Century Center, 120 Doctor M.L.K. Jr Blvd.

Info: [www.mwr-nmra.org/aroundthebend.html](https://www.mwr-nmra.org/aroundthebend.html)

**MARYLAND, BALTIMORE**, September 6-8, 2024. Mid-Atlantic RPM. DoubleTree by Hilton BWI.

Info: [www.marpm.org](https://www.marpm.org)

**NEVADA, SPARKS**, October 16-19, 2024. San Francisco Overland, 2024 SPH&TS Convention. Nugget Casino Resort, 1100 Nugget Avenue.

Info: [sphts.org/convention](https://sphts.org/convention)

**NORTH CAROLINA, DURHAM**, October 17-20, 2024. Piedmont Junction 2024, Mid-Eastern Region NMRA Convention. Raleigh-Durham Marriott.

Info: [piedmontjunction.cpd13.org](https://piedmontjunction.cpd13.org)

**OHIO, MARION**, October 10-12, 2024. Central Ohio RPM. Marion Union Station.

Info: [centralohiorpm.wordpress.com](https://centralohiorpm.wordpress.com)

**OHIO, MIDDLEBURG HEIGHTS (Cleveland)**, May 16-19, 2024. North Coast Limited, Mid-Central Region 2024 Convention. Crowne Plaza Hotel, 7230 Engle Rd.

Info: [northcoastlimited2024.org](https://northcoastlimited2024.org)

**OREGON, PORTLAND**, October 5, 2024. Bridgetown RPM Meet.  
Shilo Inn Portland Airport, 11707 NE Airport Way.

Info: [www.brpmm.com](http://www.brpmm.com)

**PENNSYLVANIA, HARRISBURG**, September 21-22, 2024.

Anthracite Railroad Modelers Meet XII. Reading Railroad  
Heritage Museum, 500 South 3rd Street.

Info: [readingrrmm.com](http://readingrrmm.com)

**PENNSYLVANIA, PITTSBURGH**, September 11-14, 2024. 44th  
National Narrow Gauge Convention. Doubletree by Hilton Hotel  
Pittsburgh – Green Tree, 500 Mansfield Avenue.

Info: [www.44nngc.com](http://www.44nngc.com)

**TEXAS, FOREST HILL**, June 24, 2024. Red River RPM Event.  
Forest Hill Civic Center, 6901 Wichita Street.

Info: [redriverrpm.org](http://redriverrpm.org) ■

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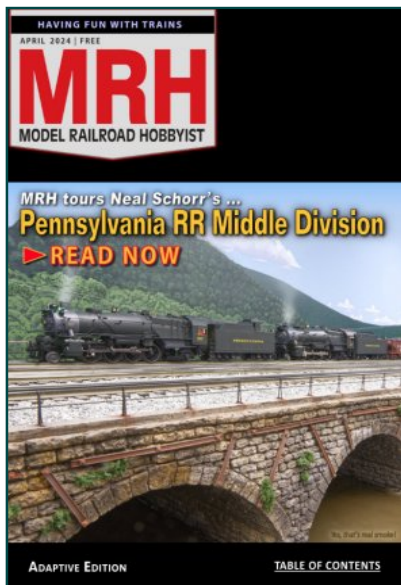
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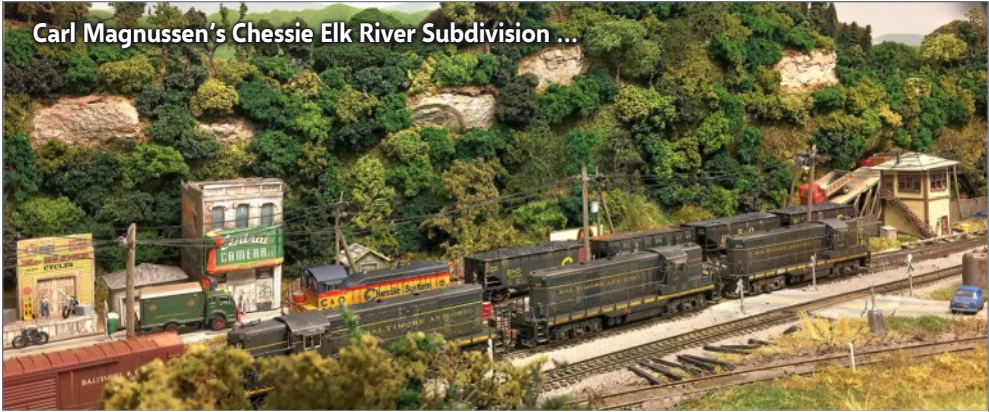
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